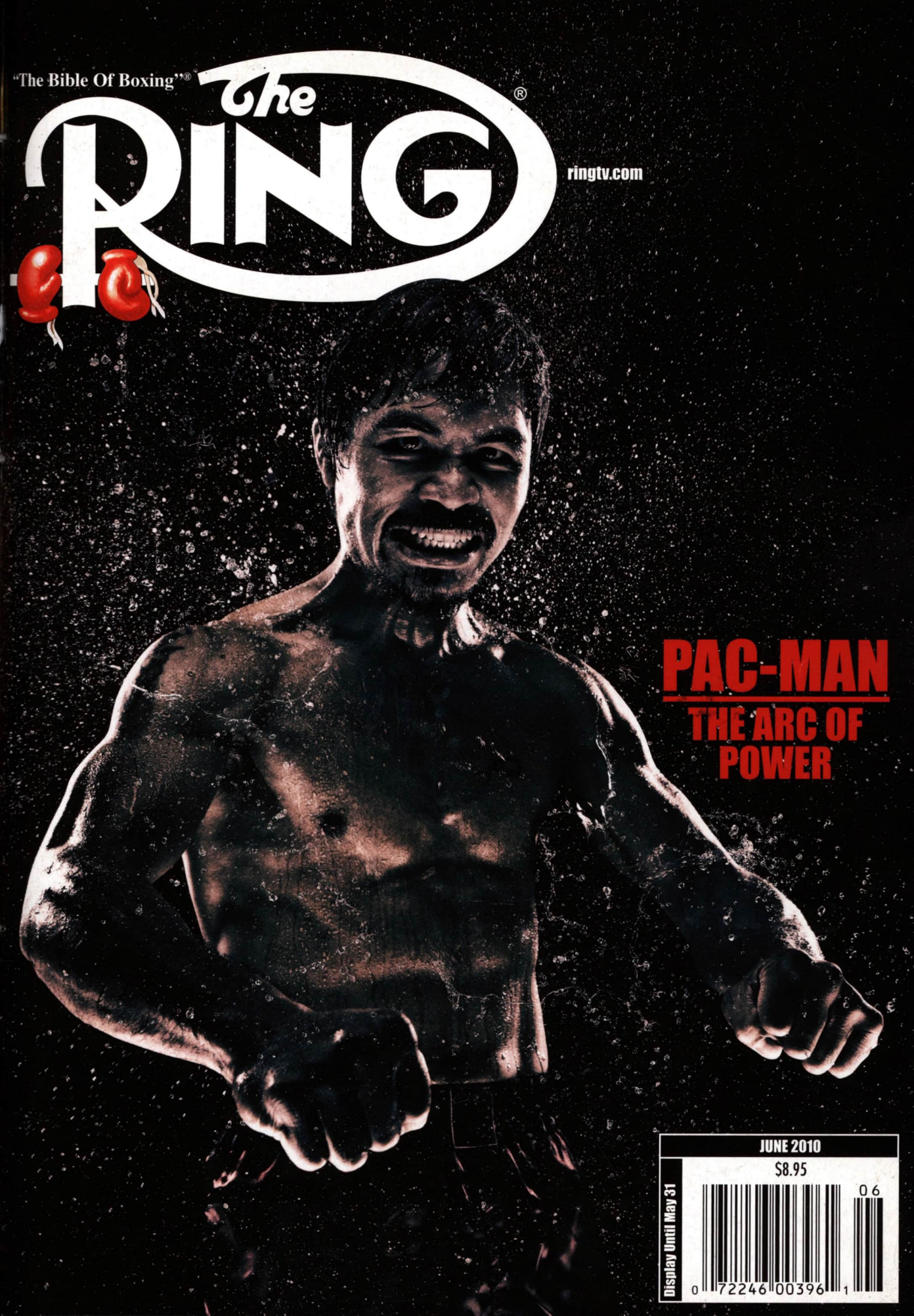
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Volume 89, No. 7 June 2010

The RING

The Art Of Delaying The Inevitable

It's been well-established that most Filipinos do not want Manny Pacquiao to dip even his baby toe into the cesspool of Philippine politics, let alone dive headfirst into the deep end. He is far too valuable to the national psyche for that.

Pacquiao's ring victories are his people's victories. He is their champion in the broadest sense of the word, the collective face of the nation, the one who sallies forth and slays the dragon on their behalf.

Through Manny, even the impoverished masses taste the sweetness of victory. You'd have to be crazy to want to trade somebody as special as Pacquiao for another tinhorn politician.

Most non-Filipino fans are more worried about losing the pound-for-pound king than fretting over the details. Even Floyd Mayweather's supporters want Pacquiao to stick around long enough to share the ring with their man.

The boxing industry doesn't want him to become a politician either. It needs Pacquiao to continue to build on the up-spike the sport is enjoying, a spike he has, to a significant degree, spearheaded.

Thanks to Ted Lerner, THE RING's Philippines correspondent, we have some reassuring news. Lerner was the master of ceremonies at this year's Gabriel "Flash" Elorde Memorial Boxing Awards-Banquet of Champions, held annually in Manila. Pacquiao, fresh from his victory over Joshua Clottey, was the guest of honor and Lerner had an opportunity to speak to him privately, away from the omnipresent entourage that dogs the fighter's every footstep.

"He told me that he will fight again even if he wins the election," reported Lerner.

Win or lose, Pacquiao is going to spend a lot of his money running for congress, but regardless of the financial drain, getting away from boxing is the best thing that could happen to him at this time.

Despite Manny's amazing run of victories, we should not forget that most of those fights were against men who were naturally larger than him. He is forced to eat five times a day, as well as swallow numerous protein drinks, to maintain the pounds he needs to fight as a welterweight. It is a regimen that even his strength and conditioning coach, Alex Ariza, said could eventually be bad for Pacquiao's liver.

Pacquiao has been winning in such a dominant fashion that people forget the punishment his body is taking by competing against opponents who frequently come into the ring 20 pounds heavier than Manny's best fighting weight. Although he plays a superhero in his latest movie, *Wapakman*, Pacquiao is just as human as the rest of us, and his body can only stand so much stress before it begins to break down.

Trainer Freddie Roach has said that he would like Manny to have just one more fight, against Mayweather, and then hang up his gloves. That scenario, however, is unlikely. Not only is Pacquiao spending money almost as fast as he makes it, a fighter seldom retires until he absorbs a bad beating.

No boxer goes on forever and Pacquiao is no different. I doubt he'll be another Bernard Hopkins and still be fighting in his mid-40s. The trick for prolonging his time at the top as long as possible is not keeping him out of the political arena; it's rationing out his fights like the gold they are and perhaps returning to fighting men closer to his natural weight.

Pacquiao vs. Edwin Valero at 140 would be a great place to start.

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[Opening Shot]

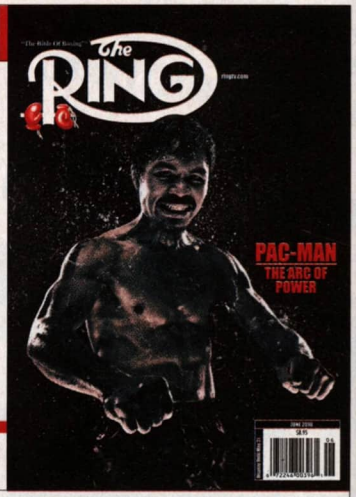
Read All About It!

First-time visitors to the Philippines might be surprised to discover how many English-language newspapers there are in a country where the official language is Tagalog. All the newspapers, however, have one thing in common: Nonstop coverage of Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao. Even the most insignificant news of "Pac-Man" is covered in great detail, but when he fights, it's front-page in every publication throughout the nation.

PHOTO BY TED ALJIBE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Contents

The RING



June 2010

Cover Photo by **Howard Schatz**
Cover Design by **David Romanosky**

Features

28 Reaching For Greatness
Can Wladimir Find His Joe Frazier?
By Brian Doogan

36 The Arc Of Power
Pacquiao And Boxing's New World Order
By Nigel Collins

44 Double Standard
Why Holyfield Skirts Scandal
By William Dettloff

51 Crowd Pleasers
THE RING Ranks Today's Top 10 Most Exciting Fighters
By Eric Raskin

58 The Stick And Move
Rehabilitation & Rope-A-Dope At A Louisiana Medium-Security Prison
By John Yargo

66 Mixing A Great Tonic
Alexander Has A Backstory And The Talent To Go With It
By Don Stradley

74 The Hit Man Unleashed
Exclusive Book Excerpt
By Brian & Damian Hughes

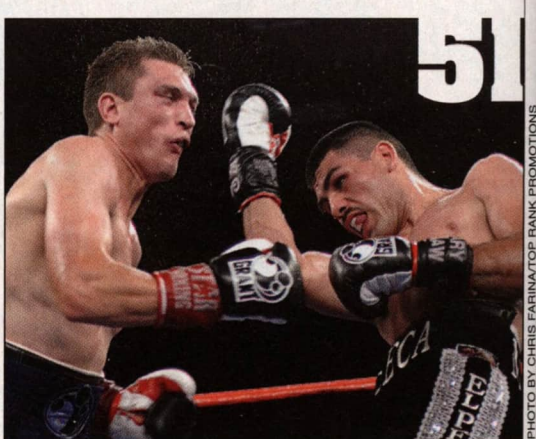


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK PROMOTIONS

Ringside Reports

92 Fighter Of The Month & Ringside Reports

Ratings

13 Ratings Analysis

14 THE RING's International Ratings & Records

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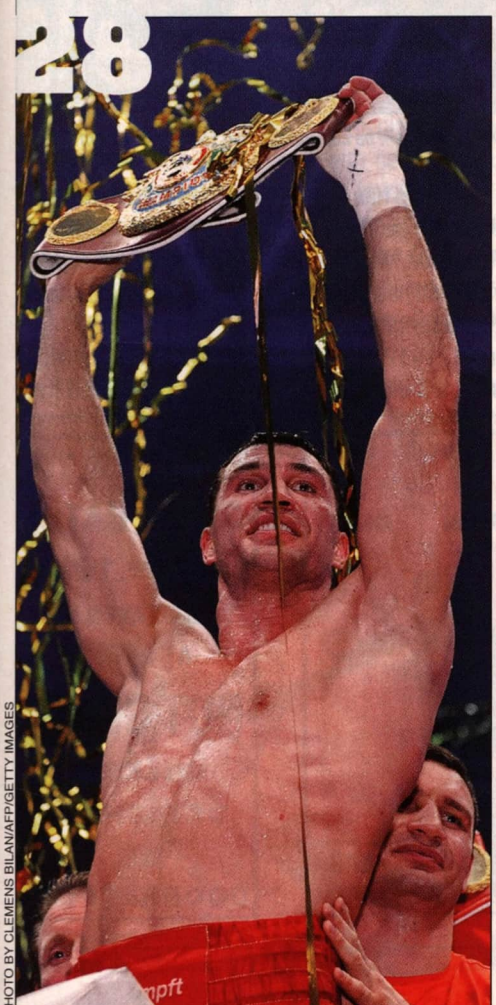

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Departments

3 **Ringside** *by Nigel Collins*
8 **Round One**
16 **Ryan Out Loud** *by Jeff Ryan*
20 **Digging Deep** *by Ivan Goldman*
24 **Camera Clicks**
26 **New Faces: Sadam Ali** *by David P. Greisman*
90 **Worldwide Fight Results**
102 **Showdown:** Michael Katsidis-Kevin Mitchell
108 **Hall Of Fame Profile: John L. Sullivan**
112 **Flashback: November 1997**
115 **Perfect Execution** *by Bernard Hopkins*
120 **Amateur News & Views** *by Michael Rivest*
122 **Fight Doctor** *by Margaret Goodman, MD*
124 **Hitting On The Break** *by Jim Bagg*
128 **Come Out Writing**
130 **Looking Ahead** *by Don Stewart*

Celebrating The 100th Anniversary of Johnson-Jeffries

Jack Johnson was noted for a number of things, one of which was his big, bellowing laugh that could rattle the walls of a noisy city taproom. The first black heavyweight champion could laugh at what others thought of him, white or black, and the idea that he had to conform to what white society deemed proper. Not Jack.

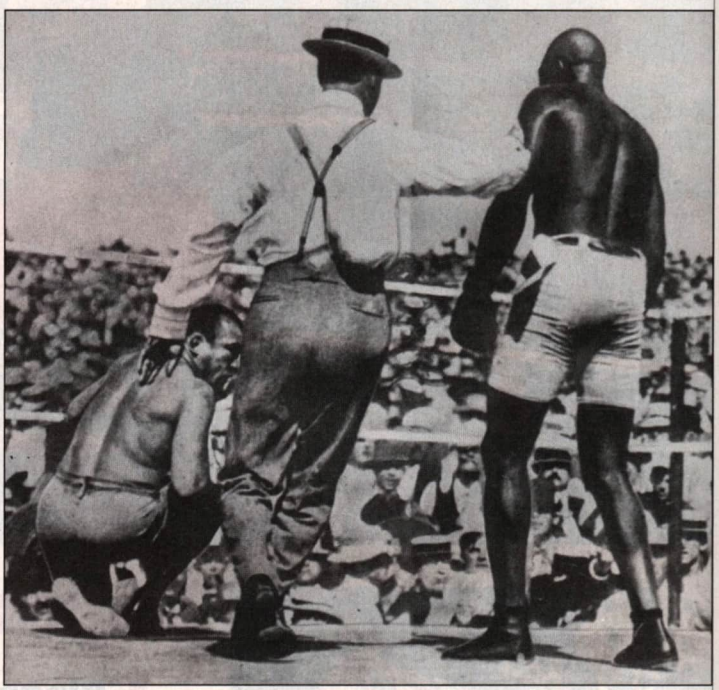
Who knows how Johnson would react if he were alive today armed with the knowledge that his most memorable victory would be remembered 100 years later. Probably laugh that anyone would honor "Lil' Arthur."

But that's what will happen on July 4, 2010, when a Reno group, headed by boxing historian Gary Schultz, in conjunction with Terry Lane, the son of referee Mills Lane, and USA Boxing's Mike Martino will hold a three-day series of events in Reno, Nevada, from July 2-4 to commemorate Johnson's defeat of James Jeffries in Reno on July 4, 1910.

The events will include a celebrity panel discussion, a gala dinner, a viewing of the Johnson-Jeffries fight film, a silent auction, scheduled appearances of past heavyweight champions, and the ringing of the original bell that was ringside at the Johnson-Jeffries fight, at the exact time and location where the fight took place.

The planners are also trying to arrange a fight that weekend in Reno.

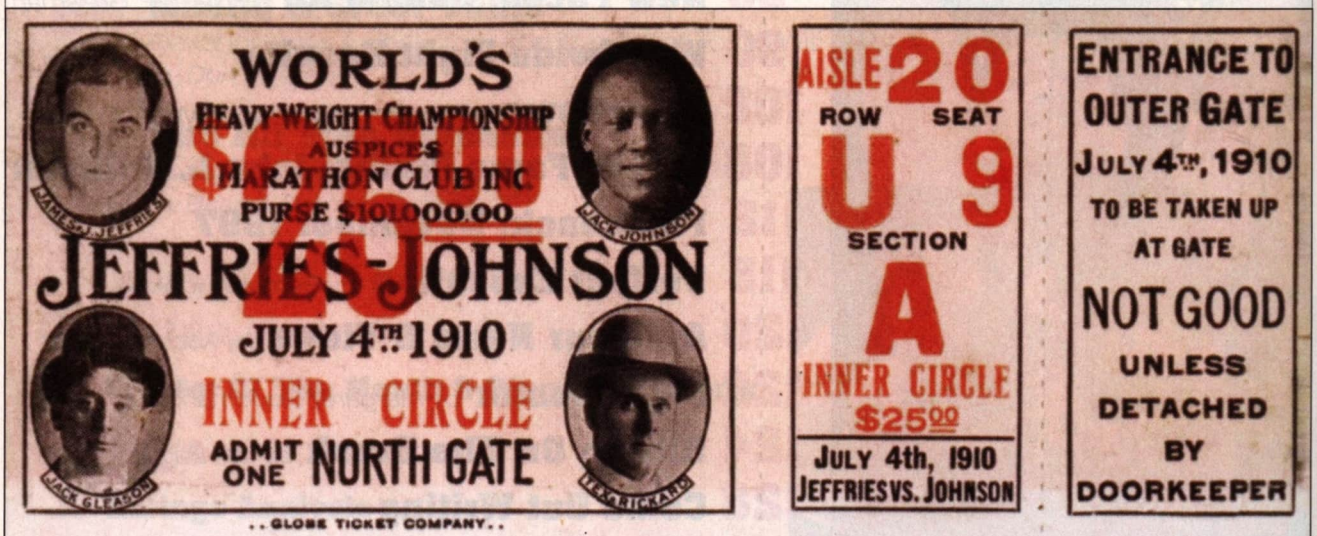
"We just hope we can do a co-promotion with Top Rank and make a nice title fight," said Lane, who runs Let's Get It On Promotions. "We've been throwing some ideas around, and we're talking about some big names here, so we hope it all works out."



Johnson's historic victory over Jeffries will be commemorated 100 years later in Reno

Schultz said the group has reached out to President Barack Obama in an attempt to get the first African-American President to show up in Reno that weekend and sign a presidential pardon for Johnson, which has already passed in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in 2009.

On October 18, 1912, Johnson was convicted for violating the Mann Act, a Jim Crow-era law that prohibited the



Replica tickets from the Johnson-Jeffries fight

transportation of women across state lines for "immoral purposes."

Dubbed the "The Fight Of The Century," Johnson knocked down Jeffries twice in the 15th round before 16,528 in Reno. Jeffries' corner finally put a stop to it, thus preventing Johnson from further humiliating Jeffries and knocking him out.

Johnson-Jeffries was bigger than just a boxing match. It crossed all racial and social lines during a time when blacks were banned from walking on the same sidewalks as whites.

"It was a litmus test in race relations," said Guy Rocha, a retired Nevada state archivist and one of the centennial organizers who led the effort in placing a marker at the exact site of the fight. "It focused this country and a lot of the world on this whole issue. And it happened in Reno. The whole world was watching. On that day, there was no bigger story in the world than who was going to win that fight."

Plans were still being completed at press time, but it appears to be a special event that has "gotten a tremendous response from people across the country and around the world."

Somewhere, Jack Johnson is shaking his head, and you might be able to hear his big, bellowing laugh.

For more information on the event, please call 217-687-2859 or go to www.johnsonjeffries.com.

—Joseph Santoliquito

Boxing Like You've Never Seen It Before

Boxing found a new friend when award-winning photographer Howard Schatz became fascinated with the sport. The unique image of Manny Pacquiao that graces the cover of this issue of THE RING is a splendid example of his work.

Schatz, along with his wife and business partner Beverly Orstein, has published 17 books of photography and is currently working on his latest book, *At The Fights: Inside The World Of Professional Boxing.*

"I had photographed and interviewed a lot of athletes in all sports, including boxers when I was working on *Athlete*," said Schatz referring to a book he published in 2001. "But I realized that boxers were different. They are alone, competing against someone who wants to do bad things to them. I think the risks they take and the courage they display are awe-inspiring."

Schatz' lone experience with fisticuffs taught him all he needed to know about the perils involved.

"I was a 10-year-old kid at camp," he recalled, chuckling at the memory. "I got hit once in the face, and that was all I needed. I took my gloves off and walked away."

Fortunately, Schatz boyhood experience did not sour him to the Sweet Science.

"It's been a great journey," Schatz said of his work with boxers and other members of the fight fraternity. "I've been able to gain some understanding of how it's done. But perhaps the biggest surprise is that most boxers are sweet, gentle people. There have been a few toughies, but most are very nice. They are also very honest. One boxer told me that in order to be a champion you have to be completely egotistical and self-centered."

One of Schatz' goals is to photograph boxers in a manner in which they have never before been photographed. The image of Shane Mosley (below) perfectly captures the motion and grace of the sport, but every subject is given individual treatment.

"I photograph retired boxers in a different light," explained Schatz, "and I'm also doing a series of before-and-after shots in the dressing room."

When interviewed in late-March, Schatz had been working on his boxing book for "three years and two months," but plans to wrap things up by the end of 2010 so that the book will be published by the fall of 2011.

Although other projects will surely follow, one gets the impression that Schatz will remain part of the boxing scene. He has certainly developed a great affection and respect for the men and women who trade punches for our entertainment. When asked to sum up the experience, he said, "I feel it's been a great privilege."

—Nigel Collins

PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHATZ

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
02/25/10	Charles Huerta W 6 Guadalupe De Leon *Fight Club Nokia calls for better matchmaking*	FOX Sports	f	C-	D	C-
02/25/10	Luis Ramos W 4 Walter Estrada *Ramos defeats former WBO title challenger in 13th pro bout*	FOX Sports	l	C	C+	C+
02/25/10	Victor Ortiz KO 10 Hector Alatorre *Late kayo does not salvage otherwise mediocre performance*	FOX Sports	jw	C+	C-	C
02/26/10	Danny Garcia W 10 Ashley Theophane *The first time Garcia does not score a kayo on TV*	ESPN2	jw	C+	B-	B-
02/26/10	Antonio Escalante W 10 Miguel Roman *Early Fight of the Year candidate*	ESPN2	f	B-	B+	A
02/27/10	Gabriel Rosado W 10 Saul Roman *Blood-and-guts Rosado displays both in close win*	FOX Sports	jm	C+	B-	B-
02/27/10	Mike Jones W 10 Henry Bruseles *Philly prospect looks tight in national TV debut*	FOX Sports	w	B-	C+	C
02/27/10	Carlos Negron KO 1 Roy Ashworth *The 6'7" Puerto Rican Olympian punches hard*	PPV	c	C-	D	C+
02/27/10	Daniel Estrada KO 10 Angel Rivero *Estrada wakes up Rivero every time he hits him*	PPV	l	C+	C+	C+
02/27/10	Rodel Mayol Tech D 3 Omar Nino *Best low-blow-left-hook combo seen in years*	PPV	jfl	A-	A-	F
02/27/10	Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. KO 4 Marvin Sonsona *Head to body kayo reminiscent of his father's work*	PPV	jf	B+	A-	B
03/05/10	Rico Ramos KO 4 Cecilio Santos *Speedy Ramos runs circles around old man before bodyshot kayo*	ESPN2	jf	C	C+	C+
03/05/10	Martin Honorio W 12 Wilton Hilario *Veteran shoots down second consecutive young gun*	ESPN2	jl	B	B	B
03/06/10	Leonardo Zappavigna W 12 Fernando Angulo *Young Aussie gets gift from judges in American debut*	Showtime	l	B	B+	B-
03/06/10	Vic Darchinyan W 12 Rodrigo Guerrero *Guerrero has great chin; Darchinyan great at everything else*	Showtime	jb	A	C	C+
03/06/10	Devon Alexander KO 8 Juan Urango *Alexander win was expected; spectacular stoppage was not*	HBO	jw	B+	B+	B+
03/12/10	Richie Mepranum W 12 Hernan Marquez *Twenty-percent kayo ratio beats 74-percent kayo ratio; that's why it's called boxing*	FOX Sports	jb	B-	B	B
03/12/10	Samuel Peter KO 2 Nagy Aguilera *Peter drops 30 pounds from last loss*	FOX Sports	h	C+	D	C+
03/13/10	John Duddy W 10 Michael Medina *Irish eyes were smiling and swollen at end of fight*	PPV	m	C+	C+	C-
03/13/10	Alfonso Gomez KO 5 Jose Luis Castillo *Castillo needed to retire before fight instead of in the corner*	PPV	w	B-	C+	C+
03/13/10	Humberto Soto KO 5 David Diaz *Knockdowns bookend an otherwise mediocre bout*	PPV	l	B	B	C
03/13/10	Manny Pacquiao W 12 Joshua Clottey *Clottey is a couple chain links away from being a heavybag*	PPV	w	A	B	C+
03/19/10	Edwin Rodriguez KO 1 George Armenta *Edwin is lucky the pay for 47 seconds and 8 rounds is the same*	ESPN2	sm	C	C-	C+
03/19/10	Sechew Powell W 12 Deandre Latimore *Motivated Powell gets revenge and a title shot in the process*	ESPN2	jm	B	B	C+
03/20/10	Jorge Diaz W 8 Alejandro Lopez *Two early knockdowns aid Diaz in clash of young unbeatens*	Fox Sports	f	C	B-	C+
03/20/10	Odlanier Solis KO 4 Carl Drumond *At 268, Solis looks like a Cuban Chris Arreola*	Fox Sports	h	B-	C+	C-

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

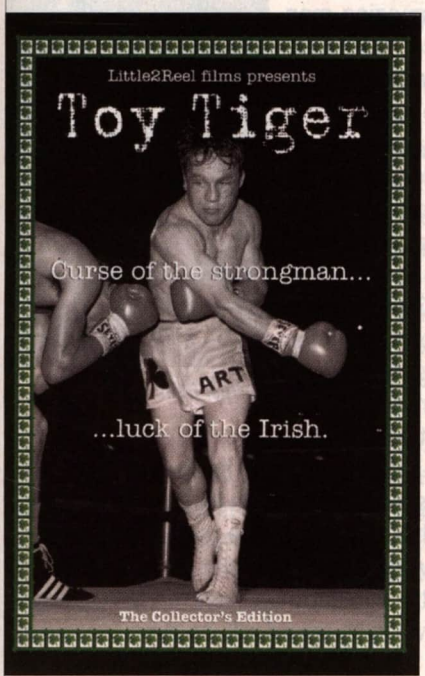
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Art Hafey DVD A Winner!

God knows how many uncrowned champions and former number-one contenders are out there who faded into obscurity after the gloves came off, wondering if their blood, sweat, and tears were worth the measly, fleeting return they brought. Early 1970s featherweight Art Hafey doesn't have to worry about that anymore thanks to an extraordinary new DVD that won't bring the riches he didn't get as a fighter but ought to recoup the well-earned glory.

Toy Tiger: Curse Of The Strongman ... Luck Of The Irish, written, produced and directed by Brad Little, is one of the best boxing documentaries I have ever seen, from a visual, educational, emotional, and entertainment standpoint. It grabs you from the opening scene and holds you in thrall until the last one, without a moment of lag or letdown. The documentary itself (the first of two discs in "The Collector's Edition." The second is more interviews and fight films) is one hour and 38 minutes long. I had to stop in the middle of it to pick up my daughter from school and briefly considered calling her a cab.

Art Hafey was born with a variation of Muscular Dystrophy common in the old days among circus strongmen, which gave him thick, bunchy muscles (his neck: an astounding, for a 5'2" 126-pounder, 17½") that sometimes seized up without warning. But he wasn't even diagnosed until after he retired at 26 with a record of 52-8-4 (36). Even now, at 59, Hafey's biceps would make a spinach-fed Popeye pop-eyed.



He came out of Nova Scotia, Canada and after whipping the available Great White North bantamweights and featherweights, embarked for Southern California. Hafey was told he would have no problem climbing the boxing ladder there because he was white. But venal boxing politics, inept handling, and a concentration of talented Mexican fighters and featherweights of various other ethnic stripes provided plenty of formidable obstacles. "Toy Tiger" Hafey (the Mexican press called him "The Executioner") fought his way to top contendership anyway in the fabled "West Coast Featherweight Wars," knocking out Hall of Famer Ruben Olivares along the way but never getting a title shot.

Part of the problem was Hafey himself. For all his fury in the ring, outside of it he was so non-bombastic and low-key they called him "Whispering Smith." "We always made a contribution to our community just by being good, decent people," says this very appealing man, whose most fervent exclamation seems to be "Holy gee!"

Narrated by actor and boxing historian J. J. Johnston, there are candid, poignant, and often humorous interviews with Hafey, Olivares, Don Chargin, Ruben Castillo, Don Fraser, and others. Theo Ehret's photography is stunning, and there's three hours of fight footage on Hafey alone. The second disc includes rare films involving maritime fighters Richie "Kid" Howard, Rocky MacDougall, Blair Richardson, and more.

Toy Tiger is an uplifting and very satisfying achievement. It's not the world title its subject coveted, but consolation prizes don't come much better than this. The Collector's Edition DVD sells for $39.95 and is available at www.toytigermovie.com

—Pete Ehrmann

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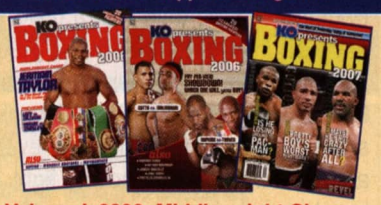

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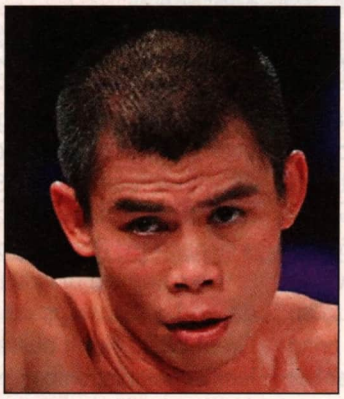
Outside the Ropes

Undefeated WBA featherweight titleholder **Chris John** was named Indonesia's leading male sports star by *Bola*, the country's leading sports tabloid. "I thank you for all the attention and support the public has given me," said John. "Hopefully I can continue to accomplish good things for Indonesia" ... Former European and British lightweight titleholder **Jon Thaxton**, 35, is running a 10-week course at the Dereham Road gym in Norwich, England, to help men with a history of legal difficulties "lift their lives off the canvas." According to Thaxton, "The message I want them to take is that if they dedicate themselves to doing this for 10 weeks, they can take the same positive attitude into their everyday lives as well. I am not teaching them how to fight. I am teaching them how to use their energy in a positive way" ... According to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, **Ocie Harris**, 27, was arrested in Chicago and extradited to Las Vegas. Harris, the man police describe as a "known associate" of **Floyd Mayweather**, is a suspect in an August shooting outside a Las Vegas roller rink. Harris, who was released after posting bail, is charged with attempted murder with a deadly weapon and assault with a deadly weapon. Although Mayweather did not acknowledge a relationship with Harris, when police searched Mayweather's home, they recovered surveillance footage from the boxer's security gate that showed Harris at the residence on four separate occasions before the shooting ... Former heavyweight contender **Tommy Morrison**, 41, was arrested in Wichita, Kansas, on suspicion of marijuana possession. According to *The Joplin Globe*, Morrison said he was sitting outside a gym, reading his Bible and meditating, before going inside to lift weights. Somebody called the police and Morrison let them search his car. They found a pipe that police said contained marijuana residue. Morrison spent about two hours in jail before being released on $4,000 bond ... **Michael Pavlik Jr.**, the brother of middleweight champion **Kelly Pavlik**, was sentenced to two months in jail on a domestic-violence charge. According to a police report, Pavlik and a 33-year-old woman became involved in a physical altercation at a Cornell Street home. The woman told Youngstown (Ohio) police that Michael Pavlik Jr. had punched her in the eye, thrown her into a coffee table, and dragged her across the floor. He had initially been charged with felony domestic violence, but the charge was reduced to a misdemeanor in a plea agreement ... People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) wants to stop **Mike Tyson**'s new Animal Planet pigeon-racing TV show, *Taking On Tyson*. "It is inherently cruel," said PETA general counsel **Jeffrey Kerr**. "The birds often end up lost in storms, being injured, or just becoming so exhausted that they're unable to fly." Animal Planet spokeswoman **Patricia Kollappallil** responded by saying, "The birds will be cherished and respected by their owners, including Mr. Tyson" ... British broadcaster **Harry Carpenter**, 84, died on March 20 in King's College Hospital in London. Carpenter was the BBC's voice of boxing for almost half a century after joining the corporation in 1949. "This guy was a legend," said former WBA featherweight titleholder **Barry McGuigan**. "Harry Carpenter was an amazing man with an amazing voice." Carpenter became closely identified with **Frank Bruno**, whose catchphrase "Know what I mean, 'arry?" was featured in their postfight interviews ... Former WBC flyweight titleholder **Efren "Alacran" Torres**, 66, died in Guadalajara, Mexico. Torres turned pro in December 1963 and won the Mexican flyweight title in November '63. He lost in his first two bids to win a world title when he was outpointed by WBA titlist **Horacio Accavalo** in '66 and stopped by WBC beltholder **Chartchai Chionoi** in '68. Torres succeeded in his third try by stopping Chionoi in the eighth round to win the title. He made one successful defense, winning a decision over **Susumu Hangata** in '69, before losing the title back to Chionoi in 1970. Torres fought on until 1972, when he retired with an overall record of 53-9-1 (35).



John: Honored in Indonesia

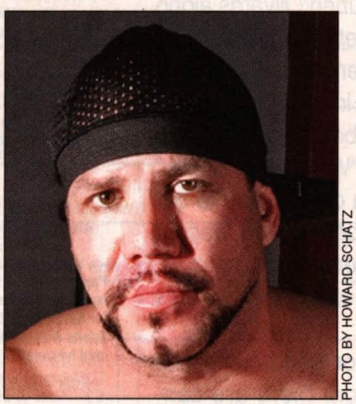
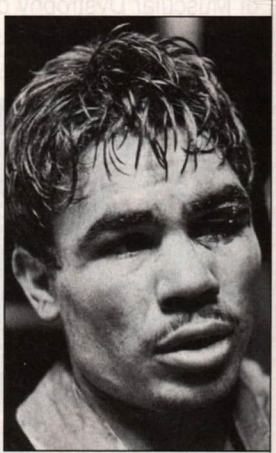


PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHATZ

Morrison: Busted in Wichita



Torres: Dead at 66

Quotable

"When I see two women face to face in a boxing ring, it makes me feel nausea. I am not really a fan of female boxing. The sport is appropriate for men, not for women."

—WBC heavyweight titleholder Vitali Klitschko, giving the Die Welt *newspaper his take on women's boxing.*

"I know how my people have suffered because I have too. That is how I grew up and because I am one of the fortunate ones to have escaped poverty, I am compelled to be a public servant for them."

—Manny Pacquiao, explaining his reason for running for congress

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended March 21, 2010

Heavyweights: World champion Wladimir Klitschko continued to prove he's the best in the world, with his 12th-round TKO of Eddie Chambers (third last issue). Chambers drops to four, with Ruslan Chagaev (fourth last issue) dropping to five and David Haye (fifth last issue) leaping to three.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light Heavyweights: Jean Pascal (fifth last issue) switches with Antonio Tarver (fourth last issue) and moves to four. Tarver drops to five due to inactivity. Tarver has not fought since May 9, 2009, and currently has nothing scheduled.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: No changes.

Junior Middleweights: A minor shake-up here, thanks to Sechew Powell's decision over Deandre Latimore (fourth last issue). By Powell avenging his earlier loss to Latimore, he re-enters the ratings at six, moving up Alfredo Angulo (fifth last issue) and Ryan Rhodes (sixth last issue) one place each. Latimore drops to 10, forcing out Zaubrek Baysangurov (10th last issue).

Welterweights: Joshua Clottey (fifth last issue) changes places with Andre Berto (sixth last issue) after Clottey's lackluster showing against number-one contender Manny Pacquiao.

Junior Welterweights: Devon Alexander (fourth last issue) vaults to two after stopping Juan Urango (sixth last issue), who falls to seven. Alexander's progress pushes down Amir Khan (second last issue) and Ricky Hatton (third last issue) one spot each, respectively. Marcos Maidana (seventh last issue) replaces Urgano at six. Kaizer Mabuza debuts at eight after stopping Kendall Holt (seventh last issue), who exits.

Lightweights: Humberto Soto debuts at nine after his decision victory over David Diaz (ninth last issue), who has lost two of his three most recent bouts and exits.

Junior Lightweights: With former number-one contender Soto now at lightweight, everyone moves up one spot, giving Robert Guerrero (second last issue) the top spot. Soto's exit also allows Vitali Tajbert to return at 10.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. enters at nine after his kayo victory over Marvin Sonsona. Bernard Dunne (fifth last issue) has retired and departs, which moves everyone below five up one rung each and makes room for Kohei Oba to debut at 10. Antonio Escalante (eighth last issue) is campaigning at featherweight and leaves, allowing Rendall Munroe (ninth last issue) and Satoshi Hosono (10th last issue) to jump two places each.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes. However, The Ring will recognize the winner of the March 27 bout between Koki Kameda and Pongsaklek Wonjongkam as the world flyweight champion of the world.

Junior Flyweights: Hekkie Budler debuts at 10 after beating Juanito Rubillar (10th last issue).

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-for pound: No changes.

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welter/Welterweight
2. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
3. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
6. **Nonito Donaire**
   Junior Bantamweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Chad Dawson**
   Light Heavyweight
9. **Paul Williams**
   Middleweight
10. **Celestino Caballero**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
ringtv.com

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended March 21, 2010

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Humberto Soto debuts at lightweight after besting veteran David Diaz

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 54-3 (48)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 39-2 (37)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 19-0 (14)
3. **DAVID HAYE**
England 23-1 (21)
4. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-2 (18)
5. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
6. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 28-1 (25)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 27-0 (22)
8. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-2 (34)
9. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-1 (19)
10. **TONY THOMPSON**
Washington, D.C. 33-2 (21)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 44-2-2 (24)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
3. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 32-2-1 (28)
4. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
Mexico 17-1 (14)
5. **RYAN RHODES**
England 43-4 (29)
6. **SECHEW POWELL**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (15)
7. **YURI FOREMAN**
Belarus 28-0 (8)
8. **JOACHIM ALCINE**
Canada 32-1 (19)
9. **VANES MARTIROSYAN**
Armenia 27-0 (17)
10. **DEANDRE LATIMORE**
St. Louis, MO 20-3 (16)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 43-0-2 (22)
2. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (25)
3. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 39-11-2 (23)
4. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 37-2-1 (15)
5. **BERNABE CONCEPCION**
Philippines 30-2-1 (17)
6. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 17-0 (15)
7. **ELIO ROJAS**
Dominican Republic 22-1 (13)
8. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-5-1 (20)
9. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 21-2-1 (14)
10. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
Mexico 38-2 (32)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 33-2 (23)
2. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM**
Thailand 40-1 (28)
3. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 35-4-3 (22)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 31-1 (12)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 36-2-2 (23)
6. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
South Africa 23-2-2 (13)
7. **RENDALL MUNROE**
England 20-1 (8)
8. **SATOSHI HOSONO**
Japan 16-1 (12)
9. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ JR.**
Puerto Rico 18-0-1 (15)
10. **KOHEI OBA**
Japan 27-0-1 (11)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 28-2 (12)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 28-1-1 (10)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 20-0 (14)
5. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 27-2 (22)
6. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 19-0 (11)
7. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
8. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 19-0 (12)
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 40-3-1 (30)
10. **SASHA BAKHTIN**
Russia 24-0 (11)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
   Philadelphia, PA 22-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
   Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 31-0 (17)
4. **MARCO HUCK**
   Yugoslavia 28-1 (21)
5. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
   Italy 26-2-1 (10)
6. **TROY ROSS**
   Canada 23-1 (16)
7. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 28-3 (25)
8. **MATT GODFREY**
   Providence, RI 20-1 (10)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
   England 14-2-3 (6)
10. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
    Russia 19-0 (14)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHAD DAWSON**
   New Haven, CT 29-0 (17)
2. **GLEN JOHNSON**
   Jamaica 50-13-2 (34)
3. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 50-5-1 (32)
4. **JEAN PASCAL**
   Haiti 25-1 (16)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
6. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
   Tallahassee, FL 20-0 (18)
7. **VYACHESLAV UZELKOV**
   Ukraine 22-0 (14)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
   Romania 26-2 (15)
9. **KARO MURAT**
   Iraq 21-0 (13)
10. **NATHAN CLEVERLY**
    England 19-0 (9)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **LUCIAN BUTE**
   Romania 25-0 (20)
2. **ANDRE WARD**
   Oakland, CA 21-0 (13)
3. **CARL FROCH**
   England 26-0 (21)
4. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
   Denmark 42-2 (32)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
   Cameroon 28-3-2 (19)
6. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
   Armenia 31-0 (25)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
   Tulsa, OK 29-1 (20)
8. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
   Mexico 28-3 (21)
9. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
   Germany 37-2 (23)
10. **EDUARD GUTKNECHT**
    Kazakhstan 18-0 (7)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 36-1 (32)

1. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 33-2-1 (14)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
   Augusta, GA 38-1 (27)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
   Germany 33-3 (16)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
   Armenia 31-4 (16)
5. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
   England 26-2 (18)
6. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 38-3 (23)
7. **DAVID LOPEZ**
   Mexico 38-12 (23)
8. **DANIEL GEALE**
   Australia 22-1 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
   Germany 28-0 (10)
10. **ROMAN KARMAZIN**
    Russia 40-3-1 (26)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines 51-3-2 (38)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 40-0 (25)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 34-2 (27)
5. **ANDRE BERTO**
   Winter Haven, FL 25-0 (19)
6. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
   Ghana 35-4 (20)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
   Queens, NY 30-4 (15)
8. **RAFAL JACKIEWICZ**
   Poland 36-8-1 (18)
9. **JAN ZAVECK**
   Slovenia 28-1 (16)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
    Ukraine 30-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 51-3-2 (38)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   Palm Springs, CA 25-0 (11)
2. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
   St. Louis, MO 20-0 (13)
3. **AMIR KHAN**
   England 22-1 (16)
4. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 45-2 (32)
5. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
   Brooklyn, NY 27-3 (5)
6. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
   Argentina 27-1 (26)
7. **JUAN URANGO**
   Colombia 22-3-1 (17)
8. **KAIZER MABUZA**
   South Africa 23-6-3 (14)
9. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
   Ukraine 31-3-1 (13)
10. **MIKE ALVARADO**
    Denver, CO 26-0 (18)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-5-1 (37)

1. **EDWIN VALERO**
   Venezuela 27-0 (27)
2. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
   Australia 26-2 (21)
3. **ALI FUNEKA**
   South Africa 30-2-3 (25)
4. **ROLANDO REYES**
   Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
5. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
   Mexico 25-3 (12)
6. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
   Washington, DC 29-0 (19)
7. **PAULUS MOSES**
   Namibia 25-0 (17)
8. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
   Venezuela 26-3-2 (20)
9. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
   Mexico 51-7-2 (32)
10. **KEVIN MITCHELL**
    England 31-0 (23)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
   Gilroy, CA 25-1-1 (17)
2. **MZONKE FANA**
   South Africa 29-4 (12)
3. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
   Puerto Rico 23-0-1 (14)
4. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
   South Africa 24-5-2 (15)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 37-4-1 (19)
6. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
   Japan 14-0 (11)
7. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
   Mexico 21-1-1 (15)
8. **JORGE LINARES**
   Venezuela 27-1 (18)
9. **JORGE SOLIS**
   Mexico 38-2-2 (28)
10. **VITALI TAJBERT**
    19-1 (6) Kazakhstan

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Armenia 34-2-1 (27)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan 13-1-1 (8)
3. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
   South Africa 16-0 (6)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
   Mexico 30-6-2 (22)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 34-3 (27)
6. **KOHEI KONO**
   Japan 24-4 (8)
7. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   Philippines 23-1 (15)
8. **DAIGO NAKAHIRO**
   Japan 21-2-1 (8)
9. **DRIAN FRANCISCO**
   Philippines 18-0-1 (14)
10. **JORGE ARCE**
    Mexico 53-6-1 (40)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 22-0 (14)
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 74-3-1 (39)
3. **DAISUKE NAITO**
   Japan 35-3-3 (22)
4. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 16-2 (11)
5. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
   Thailand 48-2-1 (20)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 31-0-2 (19)
7. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
   Japan 36-5-2 (17)
8. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
   South Africa 25-2 (16)
9. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
   Panama 19-1 (14)
10. **ZOLANI TETE**
    South Africa 12-0 (11)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 33-0-1 (6)

1. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
   Mexico 23-1-1 (19)
2. **RODEL MAYOL**
   Philippines 26-4-2 (20)
3. **CARLOS TAMARA**
   Colombia 21-4 (15)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico 37-6 (21)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   Waipahu, HI 26-3 (15)
6. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 29-2-2 (20)
7. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina 23-1 (13)
8. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
   Philippines 14-0 (8)
9. **OMAR NINO**
   Mexico 28-3-2 (11)
10. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
    South Africa 14-0 (5)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

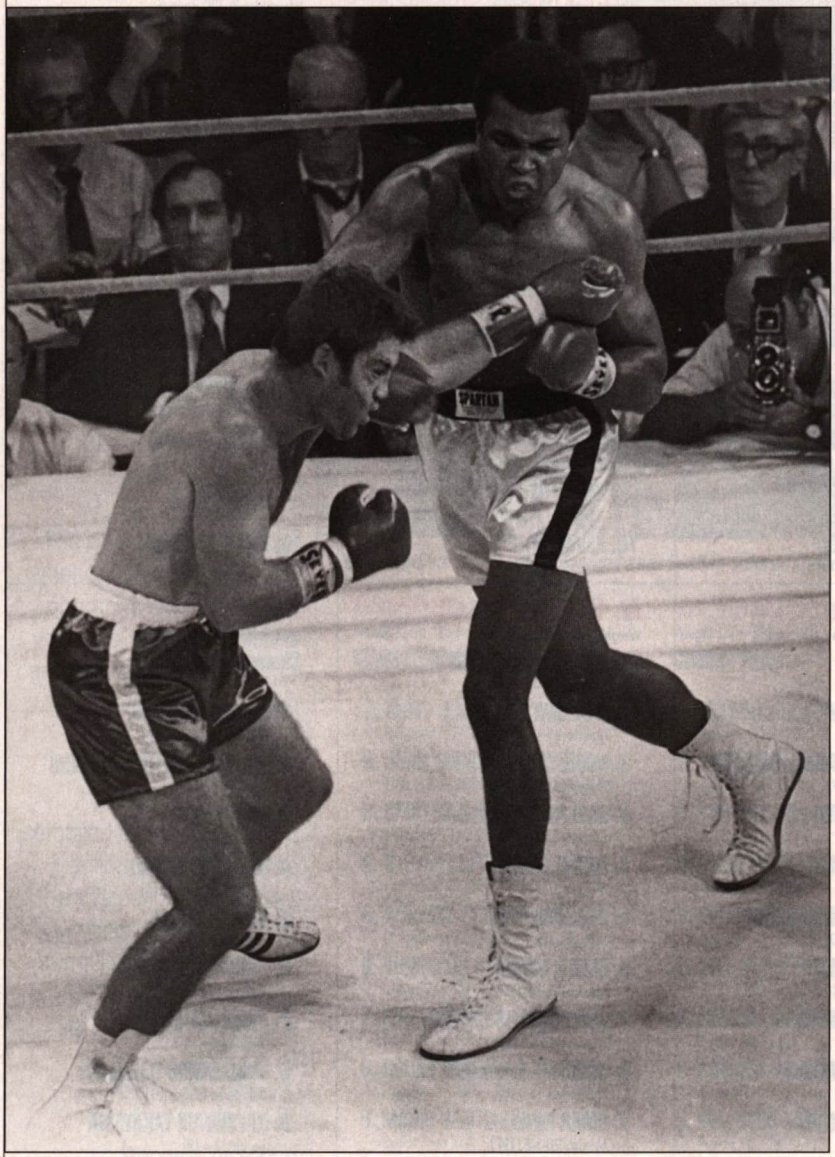
Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
   Nicaragua 25-0 (21)
2. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand 33-0 (12)
3. **RAUL GARCIA**
   Mexico 27-0-1 (16)
4. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
   South Africa 20-0 (15)
5. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines 26-1-3 (15)
6. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines 23-5-1 (20)
7. **JUAN PALACIOS**
   Nicaragua 26-3 (21)
8. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
   Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)
9. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan 23-4 (9)
10. **YASUTAKA KUROKI**
    Japan 23-3-1 (15)

By Jeff Ryan

Bunker Mentality

All is right with the world. Tiger Woods has ended his hiatus, and the media has returned to kissing his ass. The first guy out on the dance floor following Woods' announcement of his return was ESPN.com columnist Bill Simmons, whose website love letter to The Unfaithful One may have been one of the five stupidest things I've ever read, and that includes excerpts from the health care bill, assorted scribbling on men's room walls, and a synopsis of the next Miley Cyrus movie.



In his first bout after exile, Ali beat Quarry

Normally, this wouldn't bother me or be even worthy of a mention, but Simmons crossed my personal Maginot Line when he tried to glorify Woods at the expense of the fight game. (Hey, Bill, the only Tiger we boxing guys ever want to hear about is Dick.) Specifically, he went into great detail explaining why Woods' comeback from five months away from his game would be "much tougher" than Muhammad Ali's return to boxing after a 3½ year exile.

Here's the quickie version of the author's nine reasons for making such a nutty claim: 1) Woods didn't play any competitive golf for over four months, 2) He has self-confidence issues, especially with this latest layoff coming on the heels of 2008 knee surgery, 3) He's 34, an age at which many greats have stopped winning major tournaments, 4) Unlike Ali, Woods is a family man who will have to balance his sport with a commitment to home life, 5) The paparazzi will stalk poor Tiger, 6) Today's 24/7 media wolf pack will monitor his every off-course move and be ready to report on it, 7) Fans will heckle Woods, 8) Ali had Black America and the anti-war movement behind him, while Woods has no such guaranteed rooting section, and 9) A regular schedule may put incredible pressure on Woods, whereas Ali "by contrast, fought only every few months and had the luxury of picking cream-puff opponents if need be."

Cream-puff opponents? Let's look at Ali's return. The former heavyweight king's first outing in more than three years was against a *top*-10 contender, Jerry Quarry, who was coming off a win over previously unbeaten and highly touted Mac Foster. In Comeback Bout Two, Ali kayoed dangerous Oscar Bonavena, the only stoppage the Argentine would suffer in a 68-fight career that included 25 rounds of absorbing Joe Frazier's left hooks. Bout Three was the classic against the unbeaten "Smokin' Joe," and in Bout Four, Ali eschewed an easy bounce-back foe following his first defeat in favor of the tough Jimmy Ellis.

PHOTO BY MARK DADSWELL/GETTY IMAGES

Tiger: Dimwitted comparison

Ali may have had Black America and the anti-war movement on his side, but he also knew that a large segment of the population despised him. Woods has nothing worse than a bunch of disgusted housewives pissed at him, and surely none of them is going to haunt him with the kind of death threats Ali received. And it's foolish to suggest that Woods doesn't have a built-in cheering section. He does. It's called the press.

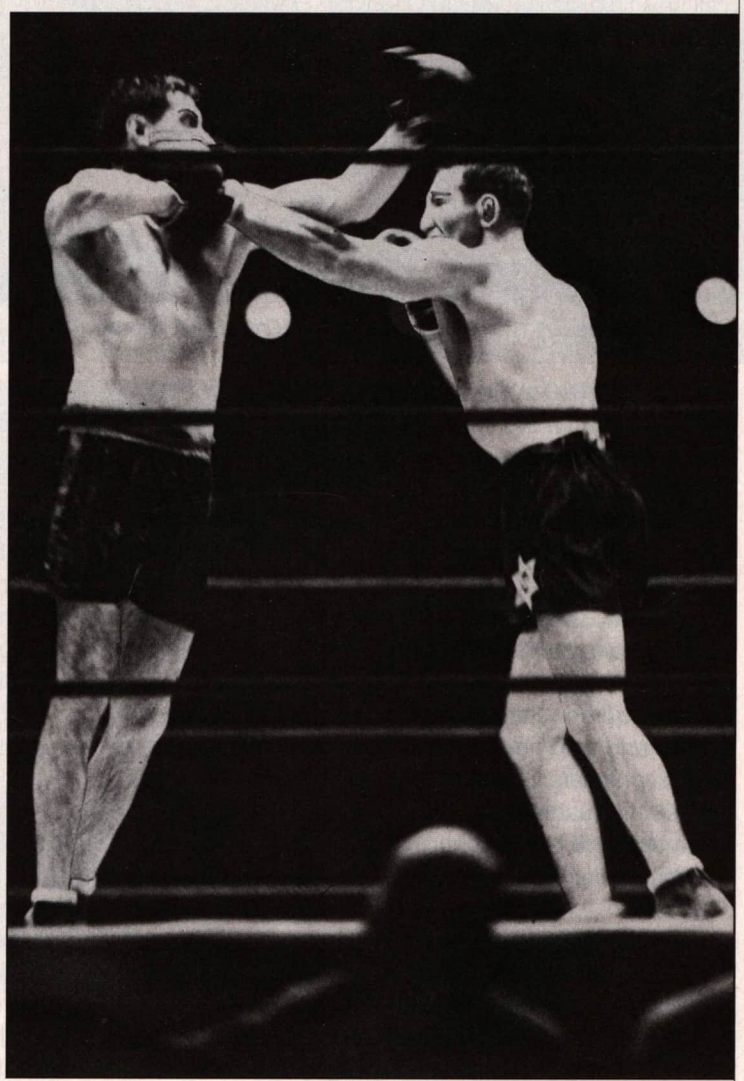
The media plays by the golfer's rules of engagement, makes excuses for every bad shot he hits ("Uh-oh, Tiger drove that one into the trees. But that shows you that even *he's* human. And how can we knock him with all that he's accomplished, blah, blah, blah."), and treads carefully in its questioning for fear of losing what limited access to Woods it has. And the verbal massages have no limits, as emphasized by the moronic observation upon the passing of Woods' father, Earl, a few years ago, that no son loved his father as much as Tiger loved Pop. Heaven help us.

Ali, on the other hand, received no such courtesies. Even Howard Cosell, who had a great deal of affection for him and supported the fighter's decision to avoid induction into military service, asked Ali tough questions, got far too personal for "The Greatest's" liking on occasion, and was often critical of the champion's physical conditioning, poor sportsmanship, or ring performance.

Woods, who lost five months, is returning to a sport in which a mistake can cost one a trophy or a green jacket. Ali lost 3½ years of his prime and returned to a sport in which a mistake can result in injury or death. Ali, agree with his stance or not (and I don't), had his right to make a living taken from him by athletic commissions after he made an unpopular decision based on his religious beliefs and risked going to prison. Woods lost some time because he cheated on his wife with an armada of bimbos. Ali didn't try to hide from the scrutiny when he came back. In fact, he embraced it. But Woods, who ironically competes in this era of media saturation, will be protected by his PR machine, the officials who muzzle reporters at The Masters, and the gang at CBS, NBC, ABC, and The Golf Channel, who will make all the naughties of Tiger's past vanish from their memories.

Just as we were going to press, Simmons was conceding that he "made a mistake" with his Ali-Woods comparison. (Gee, the light bulb in your head does have a working filament in it, eh, Bill?) Maybe the next time someone wants to show such little regard for a chapter in history during which an athlete showed true guts (risking jail and the public's scorn, as opposed to going for it on fourth down), he'll use his brain before he unleashes his typing fingers. Even if he happens to work for ESPN, which too often stands for Empty-headed, Sanctimonious, Pontificating Nincompoops.

Borough Haul?: At the very moment that these words are being typed on my keyboard, there's a groundbreaking ceremony going on in Brooklyn for Barclays



Maxie Rosenbloom (right) beats Jimmy Slattery at Brooklyn's Ebbets Field

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from one hero on a pedestal to another:

• Unlike many of my colleagues in press row, you never once heard me say that a Manny Pacquiao-Joshua Clottey matchup was a good idea. Now we know why Clottey calls himself "The Grand Master." He was about as aggressive against "Pac-Man" as a guy playing chess. It was the ticket-buyer, though, who was really rooked.

• So Arnel Pineda, the poor imitation who took over for Steve Perry as the lead singer of Journey, sang the Philippine National Anthem before the fight. My reaction: Perry would have probably done a better rendition of that as well.

• John Duddy, who had another close call (this time against Michael Medina) on the Pacquiao-Clottey undercard, is supposed to return to action at Yankee Stadium in June. He'll fit right in. From Bill Dickey to Yogi Berra to Thurman Munson, the ballpark has always featured great catchers.

• Joe Calzaghe has officially kicked off his modeling career. (Nicolay Valuev is expected to do the same any day now.) The retired light heavyweight/super middleweight great told Walesonline, "There's a lot of acting in boxing, which is good for modeling." And speaking of acting in boxing ...

• *The Hurt Locker*, the Academy Award winner for Best Picture, is actually about American soldiers defusing bombs in Iraq? And all this time I

PHOTO BY TED ALJIBE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Did Ryan write this headline?

Center, an $800-million arena that will serve as the new home of the NBA's Nets when it opens in 2012. The 19,000-seat building will be the first venue of its kind in New York City's most populous borough, and it's rising not far from the site where a domed replacement for Ebbets Field was supposed to be built for the Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1950s. We all know how that turned out.

Anyway, before the first shovels full of dirt had been ceremoniously turned over by a bunch of loathsome politicians in hard hats, it was already being reported that the folks who'll be running Barclays Center see boxing in its future and won't be afraid to compete with the revered Madison Square Garden for the biggest events. That ought to set off a battle that makes Israel Vazquez vs. Rafael Marquez look like ice dancing. And the beneficiary of all the bloodletting will be the New York fight fan. Good for him and her.

Boxing in Brooklyn was once a big deal, with the aforementioned Ebbets Field and the Coney Island Athletic Club hosting world title bouts, and regularly televised cards playing the Eastern Parkway Arena in the '50s. But except for a show at the minor league baseball stadium KeySpan Park, in 2001, and another at Aviator Sports Arena in '07, the borough has hosted nothing but forgettable clubfights for a very long time. It will be great if Barclays Center can become a destination that's consistently in play when major matchups are being discussed. Or, at the very least, if it can serve as a home court for a yet-to-be-determined drawing card, the way that Newark's Prudential Center has become a Polish-powered playpen for Tomasz Adamek.

Two years seems like a long time, but before you know it, we'll be taking note of all those new-arena milestones: The first main event, first knockout, first world title fight, and first chair-throwing riot sparked by a bad decision.

Flying The Coop: If there was one thing that Mike Tyson was born to be (yes, even more so than a fighter), it was a reality television star. The human Amtrak derailment could have had a camera follow him around at just about any stage of his tumultuous life—from his violent adolescence to his prime as a heavyweight champion to his career-stalling incarceration to his comeback to a retirement that has featured periodic brushes with the law—and it would have made for riveting entertainment. Definite "must-see TV," whether it was on NBC or not.

thought the hurt locker was something Chris Arreola accidentally closed one of his man boobs in during a frightening dressing room accident.

• Thomas Hearns, one of the biggest superstars of the '80s, is reportedly suffering serious financial problems. For heaven's sake, what do all of these prince-turned-pauper fighters do to get into these messes? Use hundred-dollar bills as toilet paper?

• That shoving match between Floyd Mayweather and Shane Mosley looked more choreographed than a Viennese Waltz on *Dancing With The Stars.*

• James "Lights Out" Toney has signed a multifight pact with the UFC. He is aware that the letters don't stand for Ultimate Food Championship, isn't he?

• Joe Louis' hometown of Lafayette, Alabama, recently unveiled an eight-foot bronze statue of the legendary heavyweight king. If you ever want to know what it felt like to fight "The Brown Bomber," when you visit the statue one day just stand about 10 feet away from it, take a deep breath, and then run face-first at top speed into its right fist.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Choreographed shoving match

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

Tyson with TV show co-star

But somehow, a roomful of great minds has managed to come up with a Tyson reality series that's for the birds—literally. *Take On Tyson* will reportedly air on Animal Planet next year and will feature "Kid Dynamite" racing his pet pigeons against some of the top pigeon racers in the world. (Did you even know that there was such a thing as pigeon racing? Me neither.) The playing fields will reportedly be a bunch of New York City rooftops. No, this is not a late April Fool's Day joke. We're told this is for real.

Never mind that the plot of this series sounds less interesting than watching a turnbuckle pad being installed. The burning question for me is this: Would *you* want to be the opponent, cameraman, or World Pigeon Council official who angers "Kid Dynamite" while the two of you are standing near a roof ledge 10 stories up in the air? ■

By Ivan Goldman

Pacquiao's Just a Big Bully

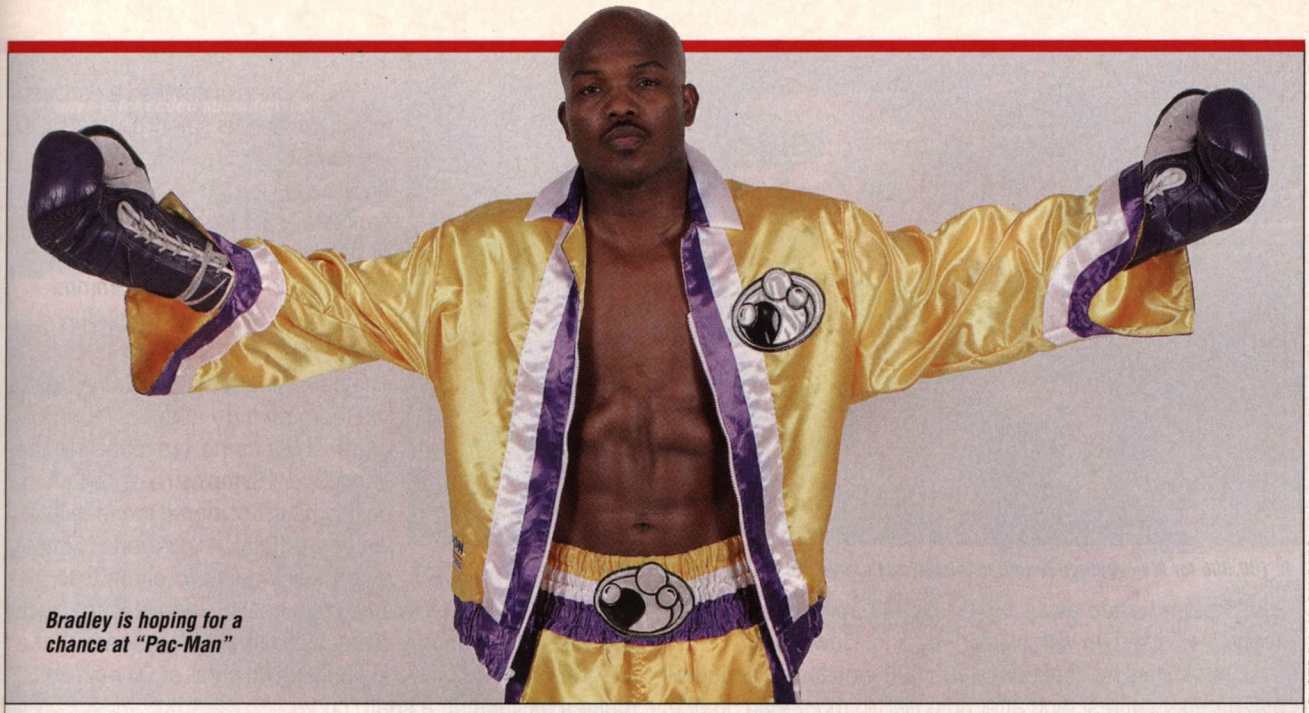
If Manny Pacquiao's so tough, why doesn't he pick on someone his own size? In the ring, Joshua Clottey probably outweighed him by only twenty pounds.

Interesting isn't it, that Pacquiao challenges fighters bigger than he is while Floyd Mayweather ... Who was his previous opponent again? Oh yeah, little (and old) Juan Manuel Marquez.

Some months ago when Sugar Shane Mosley trekked down to Freddy Roach's gym in Hollywood to seek a match with Pacquiao, Roach asked him how far below 147 he could

Attractive matches await Pacquiao at 140

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES



Bradley is hoping for a chance at "Pac-Man"

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

get. When Mosley protested he couldn't make it down to a catch weight, Roach nixed the match. Yet he made no such demands on Mayweather. Conclusion? Freddy figured Mosley to be a tougher fight.

"We will crush him," wizardly Roach said of Mayweather after his pal Manny overwhelmed Clottey. That, of course, is if they ever get Floyd in the ring. Well, if he has to keep dodging the IRS, maybe they will. Bob Arum, who promotes Pacquiao, still wants to match him against his unlicensed pet weasel Antonio Margarito, who presumably wouldn't slip any plaster in his gloves this time around, but it's still a nauseating idea. I'm guessing Pacquiao and Roach have too much integrity to participate in such a low-grade circus.

Pacquiao went up to challenge welters because that's where the money was, but his best fighting weight appears to be 140. Although I won't buck the entire world and its thirst for Mayweather-Pacquiao, I wouldn't mind seeing "Pac-Man" defend his 140-pound RING belt. Yes, I write for RING, but no, it wouldn't earn me more money. In fact, I'm beginning to think nothing I do will ever make me more money, but that's another story. The junior welter division is heating up, so why not give accomplished fighters like Tim Bradley, Devon Alexander, and Amir Khan a shot at him? Unlike "Money" Mayweather, you can bet they'd jump at the chance. Plus, heavy, heavy hitter Edwin Valero was talking about going up to junior welter. Pacquiao-Valero? Couldn't miss.

Watching Alexander stay in the pocket against Juan Urango, break him down, and stop him in the eighth round reminded me of a movie I saw lately about half-naked blue aliens armed with prehistoric weapons who defeated a futuristic techno-army of earthling invaders—except the aliens' victory in *Avatar* seemed more plausible.

Urango, who's built like a *Transformer* action figure with the neck of a water buffalo, has the look of a fighter who can't possibly be hurt but who just maybe, if his opponent sticks and moves for 12 rounds—could be beaten on the scorecards. Watching scrappy Alexander make use of a split-second opportunity to sink an uppercut inside his guard and put him on the canvas was a special moment.

TV analysts and boxing writers are already screaming for Alexander and Bradley to tangle, but I wouldn't expect it any time soon. Tommy Hearns and Ray Leonard didn't rush into things either. Meanwhile, we can anticipate Bradley-Alexander like a fine bottle of wine we'll open for a special occasion.

Bradley, interviewed by RING managing editor Joseph Santoliquito in the April issue, freely admitted he used to be a hard-edged schoolyard bully and that boxing drained the nastiness right out of him. An angry kid who learns dignity and grace through boxing is the oldest and best story in the sport and something we shouldn't forget even when we heap abuse on vultures and other jerks who also find a home here.

I met Tim when he'd already broken through by beating Junior Witter in England. We were at a well-attended card at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California, and the place was full of hard-core fans, but no one recognized him yet.

In the interview with Santoliquito, the poised, candid Bradley freely admitted that against Kendall Holt: "When I got inside, I got dirty with him." Folks, if I read him correctly, and I think I did, Bradley may be the first pro in history to confess that those clashes of heads he keeps getting involved in aren't always accidental. I recall a warning I once heard from master trainer Angelo Dundee: Beware of guys with shaved heads. It's not always just a fashion preference.

The Dallas Connection: Tycoons don't generally buy sports teams to make money. The usual pattern is for a phenomenally rich alpha male to purchase a team so he can be rich *and* famous. But it hadn't worked out so well lately for Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, whose team and reputation have struggled for years. To him, the Pacquiao-Clottey contest was just what the doctor ordered. Trouble is, now he has Arum,

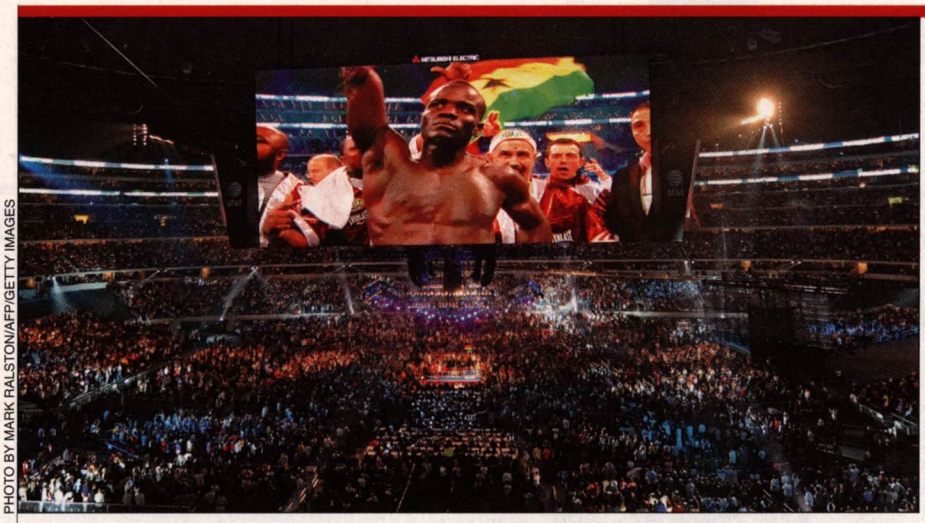


PHOTO BY MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Is 100,000 for Mayweather-Pacquiao possible after over 50,000 flocked to Dallas for Pac-Man-Clottey?

who'd been turned away by the MGM Grand, yipping and jumping all over him with his tail wagging. Down, boy.

Jones thinks he could draw 100,000 fans for a Pacquiao-Mayweather contest, and after he pulled in more than 50,000 for this one, who would doubt him?

Into The Cage: In Rod Serling's brilliant *Requiem For A Heavyweight*, the faded Mountain Rivera (McClintock in the TV version) embarrassed himself by turning to wrestling to pay the rent and save his creep manager from the mob. And now James "Lights Out" Toney, one of the most skillful, courageous boxers to come along in the last few decades, stepped up to sign a cage-fighting contract. I hope he makes a bundle for his trouble.

Meanwhile, Melvina Lathan, chairwoman of the New York commission, was, according to the *New York Times*, leading the charge to legalize and officiate over cage fighting in the Empire State. I find mixed martial arts as distasteful as women's boxing. But if you want to live in a free country, you don't try to outlaw everything you don't like. That would include John Ruiz contests, Barry Manilow songs, the New York Yankees, and cage fighting.

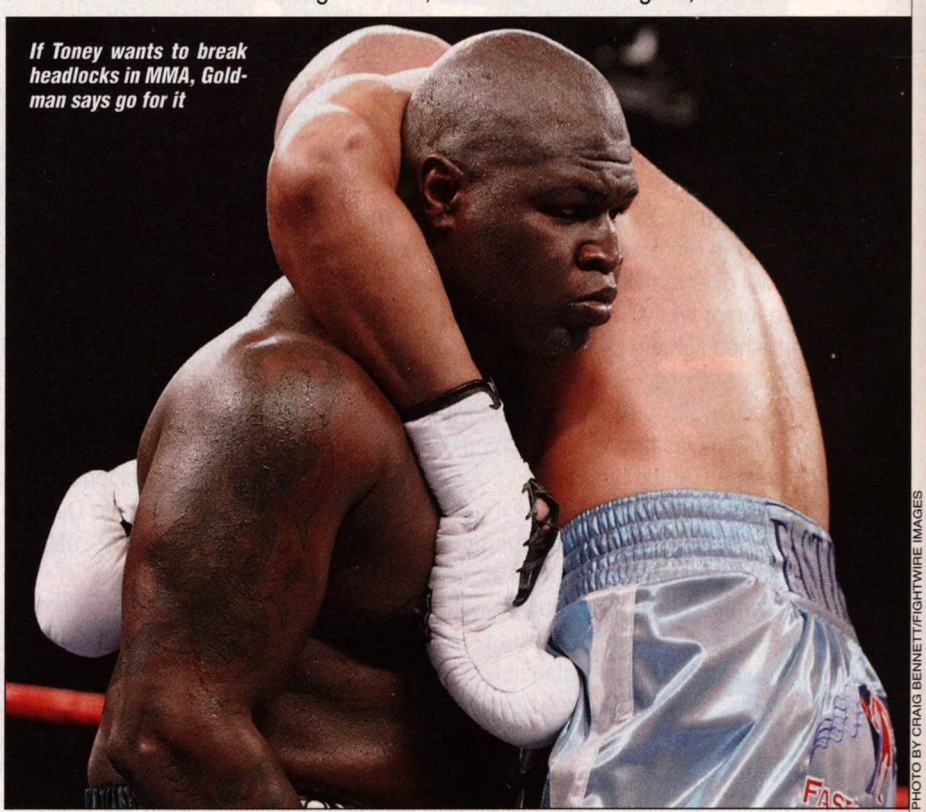
Incompetence: The *Chicago Tribune* uncovered the tale behind a close call at the UIC Pavilion. Fighter Rita Figueroa, 40, after finishing a six-rounder, was vomiting, dizzy, and complaining of a terrible headache—all signs of a concussion. But thickheaded officials on site refused to allow her access to the ambulance on call. Fortunately, they were eventually overruled by a physical therapist on Figueroa's team. Emergency brain surgery prevented tragedy.

The *Tribune* uncovered a dark pattern of dangerous safety blunders that are routinely made in Illinois contests. "We're very proud of the way it was handled," said Ron Puccillo, director of the Illinois Athletic Commission, according to the *Tribune*. Hmmm.

More Incompetence: The sickening, very avoidable death of Georgian luge athlete Nodar Kumaritashvili as he practiced for the Vancouver Olympics reminds us that boxing hasn't cornered the market on witless officials. Salaried Olympic slugs were quick to claim that the athlete was himself to blame even as they retrofitted the track to make it less deadly. They were shocked to learn that a 21-year-old competitive kid hurtling downhill at 90 mph could make a mistake on a sharp curve.

Magoos: Rodrigo Guerrero against Vic Darchinyan looked like a minnow trying to stare down and swallow a great white shark. ! heard no instructions from Guerrero's corner beyond the usual generalities—"attaboy, go get him," etc. The contest brought to mind the night Darchinyan, one of the most vicious punchers in the game, crippled Victor Burgos, who collapsed after the fight and was rushed in for brain surgery.

Guerrero's handlers never should have taken this fight, and they certainly should have thrown in the towel by the end of eight rounds, when he had nothing left, no chance for a win



If Toney wants to break headlocks in MMA, Goldman says go for it

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Guerrero needed some advice against Darchinyan

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

on points, no chance for a KO. The one-sided contest that dragged on for 12 punishing rounds was the first big test for the regime of George Dodd, the California commission's newly installed executive officer. He failed.

More Magoos: In the Darchinyan-Guerrero co-event, we saw another one of those scoring atrocities proliferating during this Great Recession. It may be reaching the point where we can just assume a young fighter on the rise—in this case Australia's Lenny Zappavigna—will get the judge's nod over a crafty veteran like Fernando Angulo no matter what takes place in the ring.

If you saw this spirited fight, you know that Angulo gradually took over in a rough contest that included some great exchanges and lots of inside brutishness. Referee Pat Russell, who took a point from Angulo, had his hands full.

Cut, shredded Zappavigna would return to his stool to face an Aussie trainer who screamed like a cheetah with Q-tips in his teeth. True, I've never actually heard a cheetah with Q-tips in his teeth screaming, but it would have to sound a lot like this guy.

Angulo had the misfortune to hail from far-flung Ecuador, which in California carries even less clout than Australia. Magoos to Jerry Cantu and Glen Hamada who both had it an impossible 116-111 for Zappavigna. Johnny Davis also had it for the wrong fighter at 114-113.

Showtime's Antonio Tarver was so sure this one was in the bag for Angulo that after the bell he talked about what Zappavigna should learn from his defeat. His veteran colleague Steve Farhood scored it 115-112 Angulo. Off TV, I had it 116-112 Angulo. ■

Ivan Goldman's latest novel,* Exit Blue*, is published by Black Heron Press.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Angulo got Magooed against Zappavigna

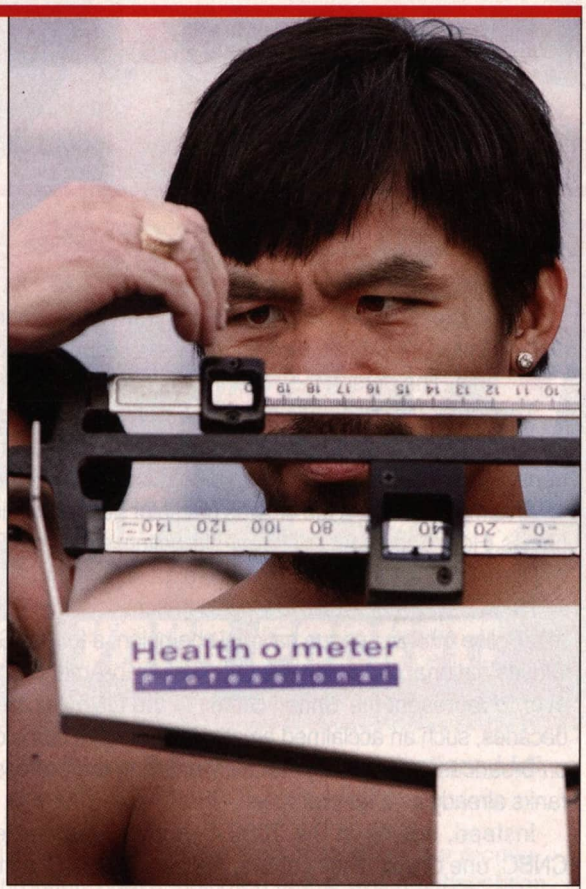
Special Manny Does Dallas Edition

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Two comments about the way the Pacquiaos looked in Arlington, Texas, for the big Cowboys Stadium fight: Jinkee has never looked better, and Manny has never looked more like Bert Sugar. Who knew that the trademark Sugar hat would one day become a trendy item for the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world to wear?

We don't recommend drinking alcohol the day before a big fight, but hey, it's better than what Pacquiao's old rival Juan Manuel Marquez drinks. Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones is known to have an affection for Caymus wines, and after "Pac-Man" drew nearly 51,000 fans to his stadium in March, Jones ought to have an affection for Pacquiao too.

Take away all the boxing gloves, and this looks like a political campaign stop in the Philippines—something Pacquiao is going to gain a good deal of experience with in the weeks ahead. And if his opponent in the congressional race punches back as little as Josh Clottey did, Pacquiao is a shoo-in to win the election.



"Manny Pacquiao … 135 pounds! … Gigantic diamond bling in ears … 10¾ pounds!" Pacquiao made weight for the Clottey fight with room to spare, then shined like a diamond in the ring the next night.

Man's best running partner, Pacquiao's dog Pac-Man, joins the champ for a jog around the track at Grapevine High School's Mustang-Panther Stadium in Grapevine, Texas. When a boxer spends time at a Texas high school football stadium, it's Friday Night Fights *meets* Friday Night Lights.

By David P. Greisman

Sadam Ali Welterweight

The chant — "Ali! Ali!" emanating from somewhere between ringside and the rafters — is instantly recognizable. The person they chant for is not, not yet.

The iconic Ali, heavyweight great Muhammad, is one of those celebrities, like Kobe and LeBron, Bono and Madonna, a transcendent talent for whom one distinctive name will suffice.

This most recent Ali the crowds chant for has two distinctive names. He is Sadam Ali, a 21-year-old welterweight from Brooklyn, New York, and he is out to make a name for himself.

He was a former Junior Olympics national champion, a former Police Athletic League national champion, a former Golden Gloves national champion, and the first Arab-American boxer ever to represent the United States in the Olympics. In past decades, such an acclaimed amateur might have come of age on broadcast television, potentially entering the professional ranks already as a familiar face.

Instead, boxing in the 2008 Olympics was carried on CNBC, one of countless cable channels in the U.S. Ali lost in his first fight there, a 20-5 decision defeat to a Romanian lightweight named Georgian Popescu. Four rounds. Eight minutes. Nothing to show for it.

Pro Record

2009		
Jan. 17	Ricky Thompson, Tunica, MS	TKO 1
Feb. 25	Ralph Prescott, New York, NY	TKO 2
April 25	Bryan Abraham, Mashantucket, CT	W 4
Oct. 31	Osvaldo Rivera, Uncasville, CT	W 4
2010		
Feb. 6	Jason Thompson, Newark, NJ	W 4
March 12	Jose Duran, Mashantucket, CT	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
6	6	0	0	3

"Of course I was a little disappointed," said Ali, more than a year and a half removed from those Beijing Olympics. "I was so strong-minded in what I wanted to do. It wasn't something that knocked me down and made me want to stop boxing. I still knew I'd be back in the ring. I was ready to turn pro anyway."

Ali's first pro fight came five months after his final amateur bout. He has fought six times, winning each, including three by knockout. He draws on expectations for the future—becoming a world champion—and on those who have inspired and supported him since the day the kid from the Brooklyn neighborhood of Canarsie set foot in a gym.

Before there was boxing, however, there was karate. David Ali's son was the only boy in a house full of girls. Sadam "started playing girl's play," recalled his father. The boy, then about four years old, needed more masculine pursuits.

Sadam liked karate. Then in 1997, while watching boxing on television with his father, he saw Naseem Hamed, the magic-carpet-riding, front-flipping, power-punching British boxer who has a similar background to Ali, a first-generation American born to Yemeni immigrants.

"The way he came into the ring, the way he fought, he was so exciting," Ali said. "I didn't see anybody like that. You didn't know what was coming. You didn't know what punch was going to knock you out. And he was Yemeni, too, and that's what I am."

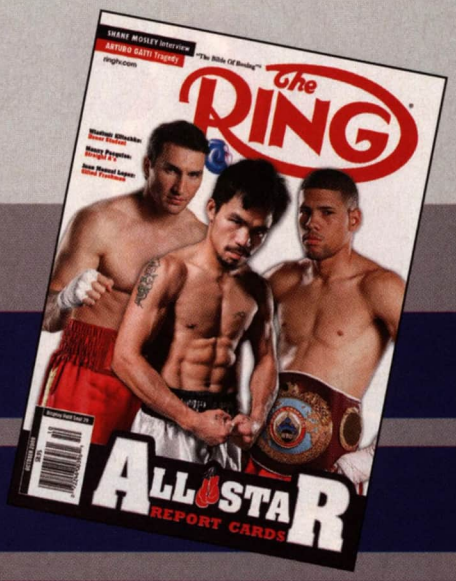
The young Ali had a rough introduction to the sport. His first experience in a boxing gym ended in tears.

"My coach had me throwing jabs up and down into this mirror, and he left and went somewhere. He just left me," Ali said. "I didn't know I could rest when the bell rings. I just kept going. I never stopped. My arms were killing me. I just kept going and crying at the same time. I probably did about 10, 15 rounds straight of jabs, no rest. I didn't think boxing was going to be that hard."

The eight-year-old Ali cried in his first fight, too. "I wanted to win, and the guy was hitting me," he said. "He was catching me because he was a lot better than me. I was crying and fighting. I didn't want to quit. Just being that young, I couldn't hold back the emotion."

(Continued on Page 106)

The RING



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Reaching For Greatness

Can Wladimir Find His Joe Frazier?

By Brian Doogan

Legacy lurks in the opposite corner whenever Wladimir Klitschko fights. At 34 years old, the younger of the remarkable boxing brothers from Ukraine is at the peak of his powers and universally established at long last as the preeminent practitioner in a largely moribund division. The disheveled state of the heavyweight division is not his fault, of course, but it is his burden.

Since the raucous day of John L. Sullivan, it has been the fate of every world heavyweight champion to be judged against the standards set by his predecessors, and Klitschko is no different. But what sets him apart, historically, is the arid landscape over which he reigns. Where is Klitschko's Billy Conn, Gerry Cooney, Ingemar Johansson, Luis Firpo ... dare we even contemplate, *his Joe Frazier*?

The 1970s, of course, was heavyweight boxing's golden era when even a fringe contender such as Earnie Shavers commanded the kind of respect that persuaded a fellow contender to concede: "Earnie hit so hard he could turn goat's urine into gasoline." In describing Shavers' successors today, most observers would dispense with the gasoline reference and, with a colorful turn of phrase, run with the rest.

Klitschko deserves better and, albeit begrudgingly in some parts, he is widely acknowledged to have metamorphosed into a formidable boxer whose range of skills, athleticism, and power would have made him an imposing prospect for any heavyweight in history to have faced. The problem is what remains unknown. He has overcome a level of adversity which would have extinguished the fire in less committed competitors, hauling himself out of "the hell of boxing"—as he described his personal torture in the aftermath of a fifth-round nightmare against Lamon Brewster in 2004 when he lay on the canvas in an inert heap—onto a more redemptive path (avenging that loss three years later). But heavyweight boxing's 21st century Renaissance man craves to be a man for all ages and, ultimately, for this to happen he requires something far greater than Eddie Chambers was able to provide on March 20 in front of a partisan crowd of more than 50,000 at ESPRIT Arena in Düsseldorf, Germany—a real challenge.

Sat at ringside, as round followed round without a hint of impending drama, the increasingly exasperated reporter from the *Guardian* newspaper in Britain, Kevin Mitchell, formed the view that the American challenger's blatantly apparent lack of ambition was worthy of sanction. "Boxing should make an example of Chambers and withhold his purse," Mitchell insisted. "There have been too many of these passive efforts in world heavyweight title fights in recent years, a lot of them featuring the Klitschkos. No wonder the Americans won't watch them—Minnesota Fats would throw more punches."

He was referring to Chambers, but Mitchell's fury relented only when Klitschko delivered the final left hook to Chambers' scrambled head which prompted American referee Genaro Rodriguez to wave the fight over at 2:55 of the 12th round.

"Fast Eddie took his licks then, so let him keep his money," Mitchell reflected. "But we should never be tempted to watch such a poor world title fight again."

In the Unites States, most people didn't. When the TV networks passed over the opportunity to broadcast the bout, there was little alternative for Klitschko's management company other than to make it available on Klitschko.com.

"Plain and simple, Wladimir and his brother, Vitali, the WBC heavyweight titleholder and former world champion, haven't endeared themselves to the American public as compelling champions," declared Dan Goossen, Chambers' promoter. "They've dominated, but that's usually been about their size. Their reticence to fight like the great American champions of the past—Louis, Ali, Tyson, guys from the days when you knew the heavyweight champion was the baddest man on the planet, is effective, but it doesn't generate an audience."

Naturally, the view from the Klitschko camp was different.

"The idea that heavyweight boxing is dying is a misperception," said Tom Loeffler, managing director of K-2 Promotions, the Klitschkos' own company. "It's never been bigger in Europe, and in Tokyo, Australia, Italy, these guys are recognized. That's not always the case with American fighters."

And this, in essence, is the Klitschko conundrum: built for something better than the present derelict surroundings but

PHOTO BY JARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

undermined overwhelmingly by association with such impoverishment. In the week leading up to his first defense of THE RING championship, which he claimed in a vacant title bout against Ruslan Chagaev in June 2009, Wladimir spoke reverentially of times he spent in the company of Germany's champion emeritus, Max Schmeling.

"When you think of all the hands he shook ... he shook the hand of Hitler, of course," Klitschko said. "Hitler used him to show how strong Germany was. I thought about that when I first met him, that I was shaking the hand of history."

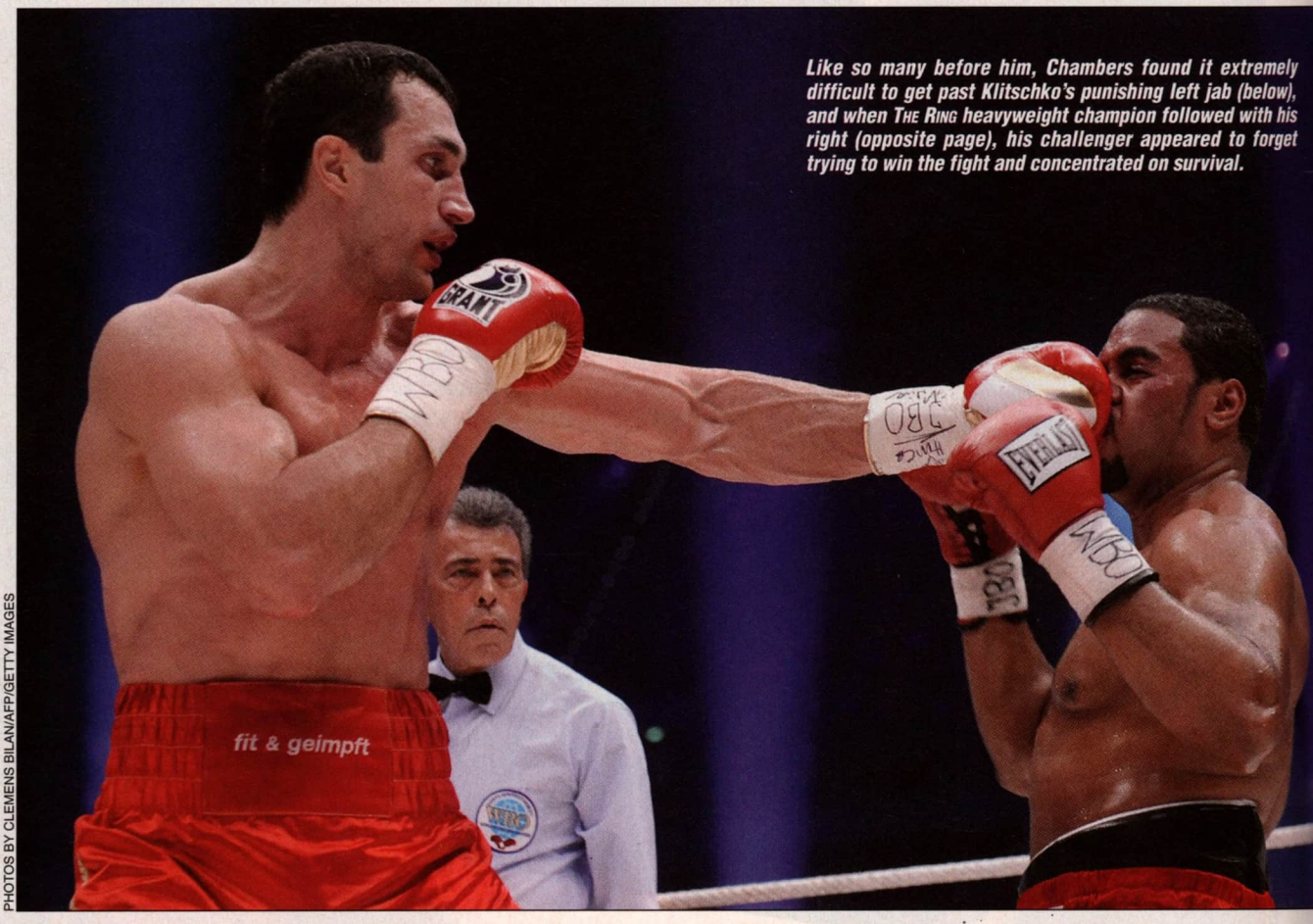
But the hand of history will bypass Klitschko if he is not provoked into producing a genuinely heroic performance of the kind that all great heavyweight champions have made. All he needed to overcome Chambers was a steady-handed display in which Chambers' fists rarely threatened Klitschko's face, let alone his well-being. So expectation, however cynical, falls on the likes of Russia's Alexander Povetkin, Klitschko's mandatory challenger for the IBF belt, and Britain's David Haye, whose Goliath, Nicolay Valuev, was slain in December 2009 when he became the WBA titleholder. Odlanier Solis, who won an Olympic gold medal for Cuba in 2004 and defected to Miami, Florida, is another who threatens to whet the appetite. He is 29 years old and his record of 16-0 (12) conveys the kind of promise that has been lacking for so long at the highest echelons of heavyweight boxing. His second-round knockout of Monte Barrett in October 2009 does not elevate him into the realms of a potential slayer of Klitschko, but in lean times it offers hope. That he dominated Carl Drumond in Key West, Florida, on the same night as Klitschko-Chambers, means that his co-promoters, Top Rank and Arena-Box, have a worthwhile commodity on their hands. Povetkin and Haye, however, are contenders with pedigree, and they must step up to the plate.

"I worked with Povetkin for a week and he lost nine pounds," Teddy Atlas told the sweetscience.com in an interview about how he came to work with the 30-year-old Russian. "He had never worked like that before. We watched tape and I would stop it and show him why he got hit and you could see in his eyes he wanted to know. He wanted to *know*. I knew right then I was going to train the guy.

"He began to realize to have a chance to compete with a guy like Klitschko he needed to get to another level. He needed to be more than he's been. He needed to learn more. He needed to have a plan. He needed to be fitter. He needed to be more defined. He needed to have an identity in the ring, not just determination and throwing punches. He needs to have a definitive identity because he's going in against a guy who does have a definitive identity. Klitschko has his weaknesses but he has his talent too. You can't go in the ring with him without a plan."

Haye's plan, seemingly, is to rile Klitschko into submission, to insult him so outrageously that he will agree to his challenge (which Haye was forced to abort last year when he pulled out of a bout with Wladimir with a back injury).

"How many times has Wladimir been knocked out?" Haye asked after



Like so many before him, Chambers found it extremely difficult to get past Klitschko's punishing left jab (below), and when THE RING heavyweight champion followed with his right (opposite page), his challenger appeared to forget trying to win the fight and concentrated on survival.

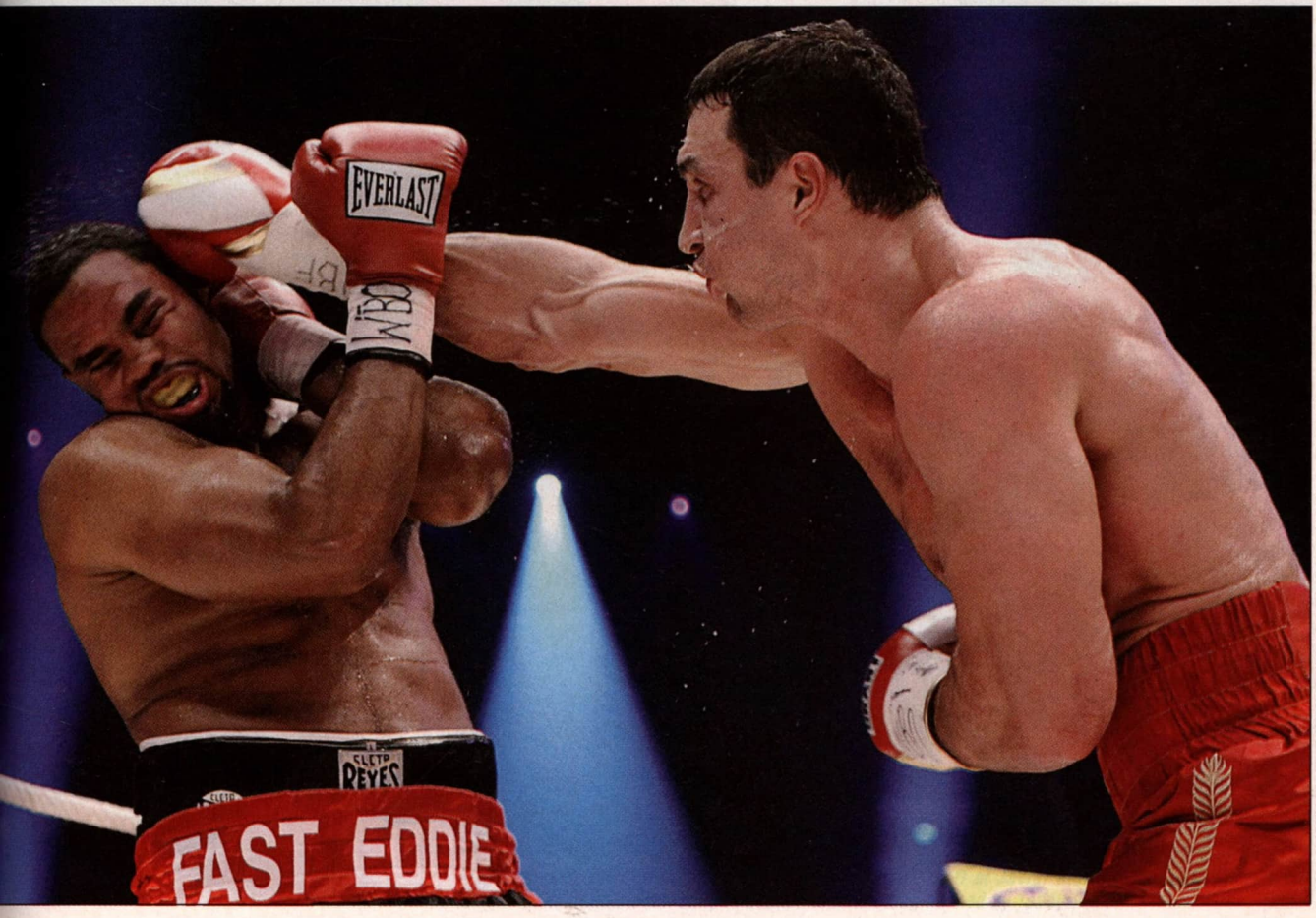
PHOTOS BY CLEMENS BILAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko's denouement of Chambers, not awaiting any response for he was in full flow. "I've never been on the floor for more than eight seconds in my whole life. Ask him that same question. Whenever the Klitschkos pick opponents who punch back, things go pear-shaped for them. They've got enough experience now to know which opponents to pick. For instance, Vitali is fighting Albert Sosnowski [on May 29 in Gelsenkirchen]. He's the ideal opponent for a Klitschko, someone small, hands high, tough and durable, makes him look good. But it's like hitting the heavy bag. The public isn't fooled by this and this is why, despite all their years in the business, they have built no legitimate legacy. Wladimir is not the draw in the United States that he thinks he is and HBO pulled out completely when our fight fell through and he had to fight Chagaev instead. If he fights me, it's guaranteed to be on prime time television everywhere in the world. Then you can start talking about legacy."

Aficionados, we can be certain, will not be dusting off a DVD of Klitschko-Chambers in the years to come. It will merely gather dust in the archives. Klitschko, of course, was imperious, strong with his jab, heavy and frequently precise with his punching. But the overall package was not pleasing because this was a bout sorely bereft of the essential elements of risk and danger. Chambers was as passive as a man weighing 209½ pounds and wearing a pair of boxing gloves could possibly be, his ambition parked someplace back in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, before he even set foot on the plane, let alone inside the ring. The 27-year-old challenger's most aggressive act was to hoist Klitschko into the air with an almost football-style tackle in the opening round—repeating the motion in the second round and dumping Klitschko on the floor—but when he came back down to earth the Ukrainian made Chambers pay.

When a big right hand slammed a short time later into Chambers' face, his legs quivered and his eyes betrayed an angst-ridden feeling. Chambers' hand speed needed to be a factor if he was to be in any way successful, but Klitschko continued to slam his jab into his face and the follow-up right persuaded Chambers that compliance was the better part of valor. He landed a left hook-right hand combination in the fourth round, but the effect was meaningless. Klitschko, 54-3 (48), dominated at his leisure, which was too leisurely ultimately for even his trainer, Emanuel Steward. The Kronk patriarch urged his fighter to deliver a climax worthy of the atmosphere generated by Klitschko's adoring fans. Chambers, 35-2 (18), was wavering and a right hand in the final round shook him up further. A follow-up assault diminished what remained of his resilience and the left hook that looked little more than a clip as the clock ticked down towards the final seconds left Chambers draped across the bottom rope, completely concussed.

"I am happy with my win and ready to take on whatever other challenges are out there," Klitschko announced less than an hour later. "My next fight has got to be against Povetkin, my mandatory challenger, and the only thing that will get between that is a unification fight with Haye. Me and my brother, Vitali, have to fight between ourselves to see who fights



Urged on by trainer Emanuel Steward, Klitschko made a concerted effort to stop Chambers in the 12th round, finally ending matters with a left hook that draped the American over the bottom rope. Referee Genaro Rodriguez stopped the fight with five seconds remaining.

PHOTO BY JARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Haye and that's the hardest bit about it. The fight with Haye will be the easy bit. He believes he is such a smart-ass. He has promoted himself very smartly, but we need to see some action from him. Actions speak louder than words and right now he is a loser because he pulled out twice—first against me and then against Vitali. Let us finish the talk and let's fight. It is boring now.

"Fans around the world would love to see this fight. They are very supportive for David Haye, of course. He should give his own fans respect and face me. I am upset with many things concerning Haye. I have had enough and want to fight. Maybe there was a back injury, but twice in a row makes me suspicious. I will do the same to Haye as I did to Chambers if I get him. I am going to enjoy the process. He criticizes my jab, jab, grab, but he will eat a lot of jabs, I promise. I will just beat him up and then knock him out in one of the late rounds. His face will be really messed up and look like a pizza when I've finished with him. I would prefer to fight him in a soccer arena, but the way I feel about him I would also face him in a car park if necessary."

If only Klitschko would show attitude like this in the ring, his legacy could

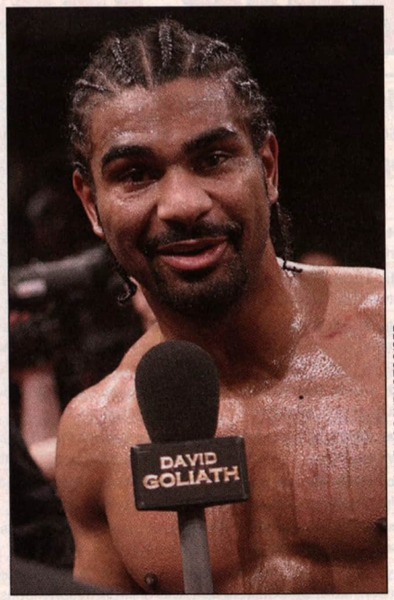


PHOTO BY CHRIS ROYLE/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

Boastful Brit David Haye pulled out of bouts with Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko last year, but both brothers still want to fight him. Wladimir advises Haye to talk less and fight more often.

have been cemented already. Instead, we must wait—and heavyweight boxing must suffer.

Where have you gone, Joe Frazier?■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

PHOTO BY BORIS STREUBEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Alexander Povetkin, pictured en route to a fifth-round TKO of Javier Mora, is the mandatory challenger for Wladimir's IBF strap. Povetkin is now being trained by Teddy Atlas.

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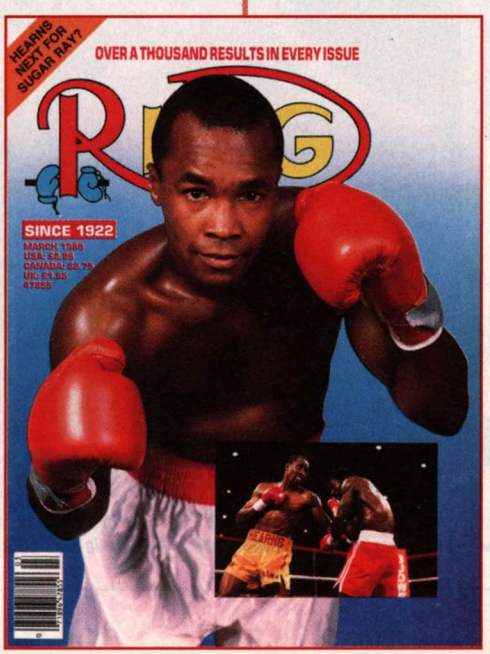

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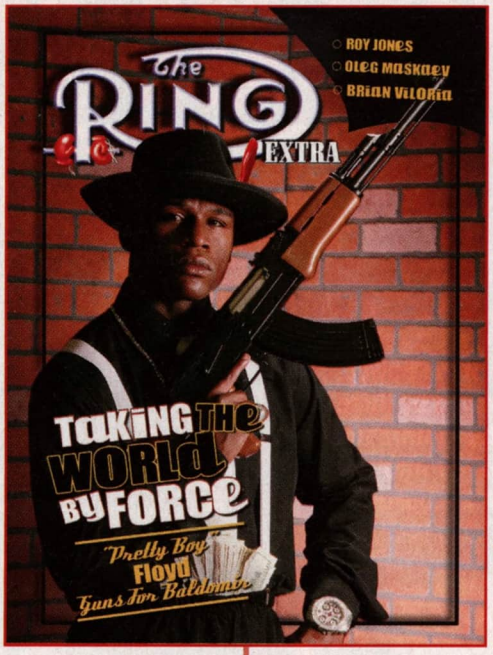

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THE ARC OF POWER

Pacquiao And Boxing's New World Order

By Nigel Collins

It was just past midnight when a motorcycle escort, lights flashing, roared out of the bowels of Cowboys Stadium, closely followed by three black SUVs with tinted windows. The motorcade zoomed up the ramp and disappeared into the Texas night. Manny Pacquiao had left the building.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

The arc of Pacquiao's amazing career is still on the ascendancy, one milestone after another eclipsed as he flashes across the boxing firmament like a runaway rocket ship. Even his lesser fights have taken on added importance because of his exploding popularity.

Pacquiao's virtual shutout of Joshua Clottey was the most recent and somewhat startling example of Pacquiao's growing status at the box office. Despite Clottey's lack of name recognition, the star-spangled affair, hosted by Jerry Jones at his $1.3-billion state-of-the-art stadium, was a critical and financial success.

Michael Buffer referred to Jones' super-sized edifice as the "Eighth Wonder of the World," but most of the 50,994 in attendance the evening of March 13 would have awarded that

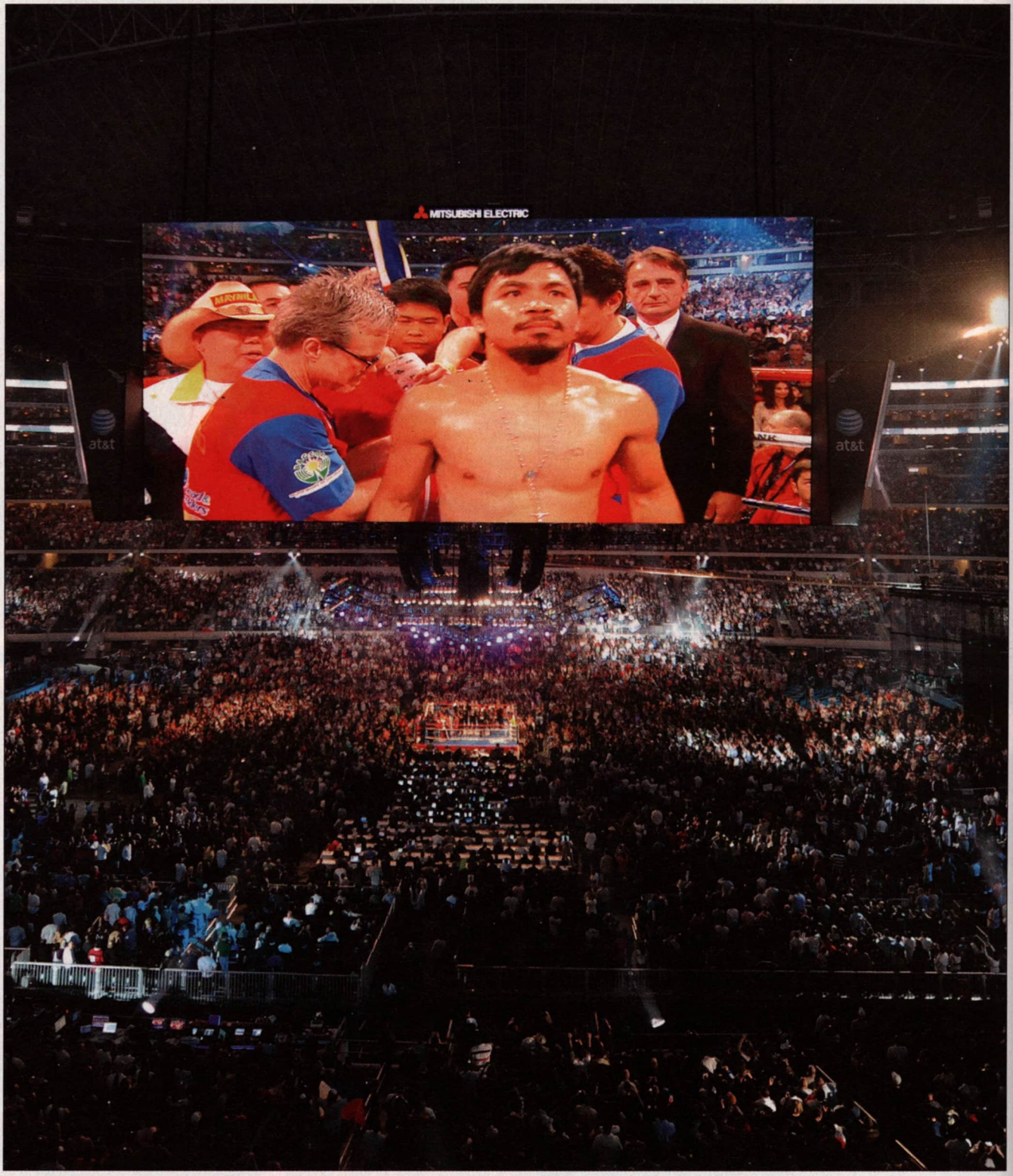

PHOTO BY MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The gigantic TV screen inside Cowboys Stadium provides customers sitting in the most remote seats with a great view of the fights. It is the largest TV screen in the world and is sometimes jokingly referred to as the "Jerry-Tron."

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

When Bob Arum (left) teamed up with Jerry Jones (right) to stage the Pacquiao-Clottey fight in Cowboys Stadium, it proved that ballparks were again a viable option for major fights.

distinction to Pacquiao. There's an undeniable sparkle to the Filipino superstar that only the truly special ones possess. It's easy to understand why people gravitate to him, hoping some of the magic will rub off on them.

There is, however, no doubt that futuristic Cowboys Stadium was the perfect venue for such an experimental extravaganza. Its unique 160-foot-by-72-foot high-definition television screen made the fight accessible to everyone in attendance. Even those in the cheapest seats and the standing-room-only "party" area had a larger-than-life view of the fights.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINAS/TOP RANK

Pacquiao displays a campaign banner for Philippines presidential candidate Manny Villa during an open workout prior to the Clottey fight. Both Mannys are members of the Nacionalista Party, which opposes the Philippines' current ruling party.

If ballpark fights do indeed make a comeback, Jones' one-of-a-kind TV screen gives Cowboys Stadium a tremendous leg-up on the competition. Promoter Bob Arum, whose partnership with Jones was a masterstroke, seems determined to keep the theme going and frequently referenced his plan for a Yankee Stadium card this summer when he wasn't plugging the aptly named "Event" in Arlington.

Jerry Jones certainly sounded enthusiastic after hosting the largest boxing crowd in the United States since 1993.

"In terms of attendance, it was beyond my wildest expectations," said Jones, who is admittedly hoping to make big-time boxing a staple at his stadium. "I believe we can have a fight that will beat the NBA All-Star Game of 108,000."

Jones, of course, was referring to a possible match between Pacquiao and the Shane Mosley-Floyd Mayweather winner. And if either of those fights take place at Cowboys Stadium, Jones could very well be right about breaking the

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facility's attendance record, especially after Pacquiao proved that he could attract more than 50,000 live customers with a no-name opponent in the other corner. Moreover, according to HBO's Mark Taffet, the fight generated approximately 700,000 pay-per-view buys, generating roughly $35.2-million in domestic television revenue. "We are extremely pleased with the pay-per-view performance of Pacquiao-Clottey. Fights like this traditionally do not exceed

It Takes Two

One can't help but wonder exactly what Joshua Clottey had in mind as he strutted confidently down the aisle and ducked between the ropes at Cowboys Stadium for his fight with Manny Pacquiao. The Ghanaian welterweight contender certainly hadn't been inspired by the scintillating *This Is Boxing* highlight reel that preceded his entrance. In hindsight, it appears as if he'd decided he couldn't win before the first punch was thrown.

Sure, we've seen countless boxers go into a defensive shell after being hurt. But the 147-pound Clottey, who later claimed that none of the 246 punches Pacquiao landed hurt him, adopted his bulwark-of-arms defense in the very first round and stubbornly stuck with it throughout the 12-rounder, despite his corner's strident pleas for him to throw some punches.

The 30-year-old Pacquiao, 145¾, was his usual whirlwind self, circling his monolithic target in search of an opening, and then unleashing clusters of rapid-fire punches whenever he saw a crack in Clottey's anatomical barricade. "Pac-Man" also dutifully attacked the body, driving home right hooks to the ribs and straight lefts to the stomach in an attempt to bring Clottey's guard down.

At times, especially in the fourth round, Pacquiao's digs to the body appeared to hurt Clottey, and if the Filipino dynamo had kept it up, there might have been a more dramatic conclusion. But after the eighth round, he worked

400,000 buys," Taffet told ESPN.com. "It is a testament to the popularity of Pacquiao and the vitality of the sport."

But as Pacquiao jetted out of Dallas (following his victory concert at Texas Rangers ballpark), boxing was probably the last thing on his mind. The next stop was Los Angeles to drop off the U.S. contingent of his entourage before flying home to the Philippines, where he immediately plunged himself into his campaign for a congressional seat.

Manny's lust for life is just as powerful as his fighting prowess, and he obviously intends to live every moment of it to the max. Some have wondered how good he would be if he focused solely on boxing, but the very notion shows a lack of understanding of what makes Manny tick.

Pacquiao's chaotic, high-energy, multitasking lifestyle outside the ring is as much a part of who he is as his murderous left hand. You don't tinker with genius, unless you're Freddie Roach. And he knows better.

Pacquiao's worrisome forays into politics feels a little bit like when Elvis joined the army: The King of Rock 'n' Roll did plenty of good work after being discharged but was never again the badass, hip-shaking rebel he was before donning Uncle Sam's olive drab.

One can't help but wonder which battles will ultimately prove the most costly for Pacquiao: those taking place in the

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao sneaks a right around Clottey's shell-like defense

the body less and concentrated on trying to reach his opponent's head.

The oddest things about Clottey's strangely passive performance was that on the rare occasion he punched back, he was fairly successful. But the risk of leaving himself open to the kind of punches that dismantled Miguel Cotto kept such offensive outbreaks to an absolute minimum.

Pacquiao never stopped going for a knockout, though as the fight wore on, the frequency of his scintillating flurries decreased slightly, however certainly not enough to stop the decision in his favor from being both unanimous and wide. Duane Ford had it a 120-108 shutout, while Levi Martin and Nelson Vasquez both had it 119-109. THE RING scored it 118-110.

"I did my best, Manny Pacquiao is beating everybody," said Clottey, 35-4 (21), by way of explanation. "I think that I lost a fight for the first time. I lost to Manny Pacquiao, he's very fast and I respect him."

Later, Clottey claimed he was done in by a stew he ate after the weigh-in, but his original remarks rung truer than the old it-was-something-I-ate excuse.

Referee Rafael Ramos (USA) did a reasonably good job handling the fight, but I doubt the Texas rulebook says anything about it being illegal to land two punches simultaneously. Nonetheless, when Pacquiao connected with what Windmill White used to call the "cymbals punch," Ramos gave him a warning.

—N.C.

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political arena or the ones fought in a boxing ring. While that situation plays out, it's best to count our blessings.

Don't forget that not too long ago people were worried about the loss of Oscar De La Hoya and the negative economic impact his retirement would have on the sport. As it turned out, we need not have fretted; the answer was staring us right in the face all along.

Fittingly, De La Hoya's replacement was the guy who beat him so badly that "The Golden Boy" hung up his gloves. The baton has been passed in the finest tradition of the Sweet Science—in the ring. Yet seldom has the sport's new standard-bearer been so well suited to step into his predecessor's shoes as "Pac-Man."

Unlike such unfortunate champions as Ezzard Charles and Larry Holmes, who fought in the shadow of Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali, Pacquiao has never suffered by comparison to De La Hoya or any other fighter. There are, nonetheless, some interesting parallels between Oscar and Manny.

Like De La Hoya, Pacquiao enjoys the support of a fanatical, ethnic fanbase. True, there are nowhere near as many Filipinos in North America as there are people of Mexican heritage, but the Filipinos are just as rabid in their support of Pacquiao as Mexican fans were of Julio Cesar Chavez back when he was pound-for-pound king. Maybe more so, if that's possible

Also like De La Hoya, Pacquiao has been willing to fight anyone, even a man such as Clottey, whose iron-like body is apparently forged of sterner stuff than his thirst for victory. That Pacquiao could salvage the fight against such a sturdy but reluctant suitor is further credit to his astonishing ability.

It seems that the sight of 1,231 punches flashing like lasers under the ring lights can divert a lot of attention away from the fact that nothing much was really happening.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Manny has crossed over into the mainstream. His journey was not quite as seamless as that of America's handsome Olympic hero, but he got there just the same. And rather than become bigger than boxing, Pacquiao has retained the common touch, which, along with his all-action style, has helped attract millions of new fans to the sport and reminded old ones how great boxing can still be.

When Pacquiao entered Cowboys Stadium, looked around at the huge crowd and heard the boisterous welcome, his eyes lit up with boyish delight and his famous grin grew wider by the second.

"I can't believe [that] the first time I fought in Dallas ... I can't believe there were so many people," Pacquiao said, "I was so excited walking into the ring."

It's reassuring to know that a man of Pacquiao's exulted standing still gets as excited about what he is doing as we do watching him do it. But the public's ap-

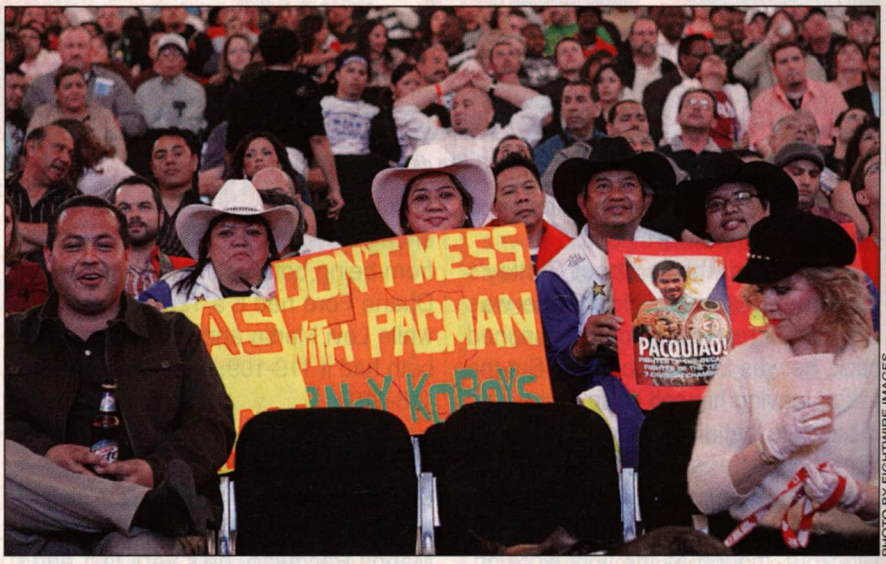


PHOTO BY FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Pacquiao's Filipino fans were well-represented among the more than 50,000 who attended the fight in Arlington. Having such a loyal constituency has been a significant factor in the pound-for-pound king's ability to fill venues and sell pay-per-view fights.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquiao, sporting a swollen right eye, poses with THE RING belt and members of his entourage after the Clottey fight. Manny still holds THE RING's junior welterweight championship but has promised to relinquish the title if his next fight is not a defense of the 140-pound belt.

petite for all things Pacquiao is so ravenous, as soon as the Clottey fight was concluded, everybody wanted to know when Pacquiao will fight again and who will be in the other corner when he does.

Just because the vast majority of the fans and most of the media are demanding a showdown between Pacquiao and the Mayweather-Mosley winner, that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to happen. If nothing else, the failed Pacquiao-Mayweather negotiations this past winter should have reminded everyone of one of prize fighting's cardinal rules: No fight is a sure thing until the first bell rings.

Still, Pacquiao sounded amenable when the subject of fighting Mayweather was broached time and time again during the two weeks he spent in Dallas.

"I want that fight [Mayweather], it's up to him," stated Pacquiao every time he was asked.

Trainer Freddie Roach and Arum agreed they were still interested, but made it clear that there would be no blood testing beyond what is legally mandated by the commission in the jurisdiction the fight takes place.

"Floyd, you don't make the rules," stated Roach at the postfight press conference. "Let the commission do their job and get in the ring and fight us. Manny has shown in sparring how we will crush the Mayweather defense. We will crush Floyd!"

"All he has to do is sign a regular fight contract," said Arum.

The truth is that Pacquiao has reached a plateau where he doesn't need to bend over backwards to get any particular opponent in the ring. Manny is the biggest show in boxing, and the last thing he needs is another defense-minded opponent.

Pacquiao probably won't fight until the fall anyway. After the elections, his adviser Michael Koncz said the plan is to bring Manny's concert tour to Winnipeg, Toronto, and Vancouver sometime in June.

Manny clearly loves performing with his band and appears to be just as happy belting out "La Bamba" as he does belting out opponents. But a scheduled concert in Hawaii was canceled due to poor ticket sales, so the plan could be revamped or scuttled altogether, which just might turn his attention to boxing sooner than originally expected.

While the American media generally gave rave reviews of the Lone Star spectacular, there was a measure of dissatisfaction back home in the Philippines because Pacquiao failed to knock out Clottey. THE RING's longtime Philippines correspondent, Ted Lerner, has often warned that certain elements of the Filipino society would turn on Pacquiao if he were beaten. Manny calls it the "crab mentality."

Even so, sellers of pirated DVDs complained bootleg copies of the Pacquiao-Clottey fight were not selling like those of past fights. One seller told ABS-CBN News that the poor sales reflect a general lack of interest in the fight because it was both boring and had no knockouts, a staple of previous Pacquiao fights.

"Clottey was too scared. There was no action, so sales are down," said seller Eric Salvador. "No one is looking for those DVDs because the fight wasn't very good."

Such is the fickle nature of fame, but the homegrown hosannas still easily drown out the small band of chronic critics and haters. On the western side of the Pacific Ocean, Pacquiao has become the standard-bearer for a resurgent sport, a new kind of superstar for the multicultural, multitasking world we live in.

Anybody who thinks Pacquiao isn't up to the job wasn't at Cowboys Stadium the night Pac-Man conquered the heart of Texas—with a little bit of help from a consummate showman and an architectural marvel. ■

DOUBLE STANDARD

Why Holyfield Skirts Scandal

By William Dettloff

"Mountains appear more lofty the nearer they are approached, but great men resemble them not in this particular."
—Lady Marguerite Blessington (1789-1849)

As most followers of boxing gossip and other random nonsense know by now, Candi Holyfield, wife of former heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield, obtained an order of protection against the fighter in Fayette County, Georgia in February.

The order, which Mrs. Holyfield later petitioned the court to drop, it should be noted, came after Holyfield allegedly hit his wife on the face, the back, and the back of her head. She further alleged that Holyfield had choked her in front of her daughter and a housekeeper in 2008.

One imagines the latter incident resulted in the daughter and maid keeping their carping and complaining to themselves when they felt the need to vent, but the message apparently was lost on the fighter's wife, who history may show to be a slow learner.

At any rate, Mrs. Holyfield's apparent change of heart notwithstanding, and the fighter's innocence presumed, the news was greeted by the general press and the boxing corps, such as it is, the way one might welcome a forecast of generally warm weather in August—in Arizona. This is to say few noticed. Fewer cared.

There were no fevered editorials decrying the favored status of the star American male athlete contributing to abuse against women, no letters to the editor—of any important newspapers, anyway—calling Holyfield a wife-beater or sexist. There was, happily, no new "black eye for boxing" inflicted by one of its most beloved recent heroes,

PHOTO BY FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

allegedly, always allegedly, having revealed himself to be something less than the pious warrior we all had come to know and, if not love, then respect.

Of course, this wasn't the first time in recent history Holyfield had been on the wrong end of the news cycle, and not just because he insists on fighting Francois Botha in a match in which only the sickest and most bored among us would have any interest.

Over the past several years, Holyfield has been, in no particular order: on the brink of having his mansion foreclosed upon despite having earned hundreds of millions of dollars over the course of his career; sued for overdue child support payments by the mother of one of his children, and petitioned the court to reduce child support payments for another child due to his "decreased earning power."

Despite this somewhat sordid resume, Holyfield manages to escape not only the scorn of fight fans and sports fans in general, most of whom continue to hold him in the highest regard, but the incessant glee with which many would assail the character of other comparable public figures.

For example, what would have been said if it were Mike Tyson's wife who'd accused him of abuse, or Riddick Bowe, to cite two of Holyfield's contemporaries with similar histories? What if it were Zab Judah or Bernard Hopkins or Wladimir Klitschko? Would fans and press be as forgiving of the failures of character committed by Holyfield if these men had committed them? It's not likely.

All things considered, one could be excused for suggesting that there is a double standard in place: one standard for Holyfield, boxing's own Christian soldier and another for everyone else. The question is why.

"Holyfield gets treated differently because of the types of indiscretions," Donald Tremblay, the former Director of Public Relations for the New Jersey-based promotional company Main Events, told THE RING.

"Up until the most recent accusation of domestic assault, which I was very surprised to hear about, all his indiscretions were of a personal nature. You may not agree with him pumping out all those kids out of wedlock, but it isn't the same as being arrested for assault, rape, or drug possession."

Fair enough. Tyson's list of transgressions run the full gamut, from trying to break an opponent's arm in the ring to doing hard time for the rape of Desiree Washington to biting off a section of Holyfield's ear. And that's only the stuff

PHOTO BY VINCE BUCCI/GETTY IMAGES

Holyfield poses with Candi Smith at a benefit dinner in 2003. They have since married, but things have not gone smoothly. Mrs. Holyfield recently obtained an order of protection against the fighter, which she later petitioned the court to drop.

PHOTO BY ADAM LARKEY/ABC/GETTY IMAGES

Despite a number of outside-the-ring problems, Holyfield has remained a popular public figure. In 2005, he appeared on* Dancing With The Stars *with dance partner Edyta Sliwinska.

we know about. Teddy Atlas has long maintained that Cus D'Amato and later Jimmy Jacobs and Bill Cayton buried all kinds of misdeeds the young Tyson committed, or at the very least looked the other way, so as to keep him happy and in the gym.

You could reasonably label the young Tyson a social menace and even his alleged thrashing of Don King in a Las Vegas parking lot some years ago wasn't enough to reverse all the bad karma he has accrued. Even today's mature, chubby Tyson can't keep entirely out of the news, as evidenced by his arrest in November following an altercation with a celebrity photographer in Los Angeles.

Bowe's rap sheet isn't nearly as long, but in 2003 he was arrested on a domestic violence charge of second-degree assault in Maryland less than

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Holyfield, pictured singing at the Holy War Invasion Church Revival, has spoken about his religious beliefs on many occasions. His behavior, however, does not seem to always be in keeping with his faith.

a week before he was to begin serving prison time for abducting his first wife and their five children. That beats the hell out of anything Holyfield has done.

Still, it remains that Holyfield, by all evidence, has not lived the kind of life we associate with one who speaks so frequently and so passionately about his religion, and maybe that's the real point here. Remember, he revealed before his 1999 rematch with Lennox Lewis with what appeared to be complete sincerity that God had told him he would stop Lewis in the fourth round.

A less devout believer might have been reluctant to announce such an unlikelihood, but so strong was Holyfield's faith that he told the story over and over. You'll also recall that after his disastrous loss to Michael Moorer in 1994, Holyfield was hospitalized with heart muscle irregularities that he later claimed were remedied by a "faith healer." This is not a man who takes Christianity lightly. These are the actions of a man with a deep and nearly pathological faith, and when one juxtaposes that against his actions, a suggestion of hypocrisy can be reasonably inferred.

Fortunately for Holyfield, there is a proven way to overcome such unfortunate inconsistencies: Be a nice guy.

"Certain people have ways about them and a personality that people like," said longtime fight figure and matchmaker Don Elbaum. "When (Holyfield) is in a crowd he says hello to everyone and he's got no persona about him, no airs that he puts on that says he's above everyone else. He's just a real down to earth superstar that just relates to the people. It's just his personality. He's a great guy to know, a gentleman, and just a pleasure to be around."

Elbaum likens Holyfield's ability to relate to boxing fans with that of Ray Robinson, whom he calls "the [Frank] Sinatra of boxing," and whose last several fights he promoted, and also to Joe Louis, who Elbaum met when Louis retired from boxing and had begun making the rounds on the professional wrestling circuit. He tells a story that illustrates why to this day no one says anything bad about Joe Louis.

"When I was about 20 years old, Joe Louis was wrestling, and I hated wrestling, but I [promoted] it in Erie [Pennsylvania] in the summer and did monthly shows. Louis did a show. The place was packed. He wrestled and won and the place went crazy," Elbaum said.

"I was so disgusted that I said I'd never do anymore wrestling—it was sickening to see my hero being thrown around and wrestling. But my mother and dad loved Joe and wanted to meet him but couldn't come to the show. I said, 'Joe would you mind coming over to their house to meet them?' and he said, 'Absolutely.' And from 11:30 at night until probably 1:00 in the morning we sat in my folks' living room and talked. It was like, 'Oh my God. That was Joe Louis.'"

We don't recommend inviting Holyfield over to your home any time soon, and Louis was a pillar of humility and dignity over the course of his career. He also lived during a time, as did Robinson, when it was considered in the poorest manners for the press to pry into the private lives of public figures, be they superstar athletes, politicians, or entertainers.

"I think the media outing athletes is a relatively modern phenomenon," said Tremblay. "Imagine how [Babe] Ruth

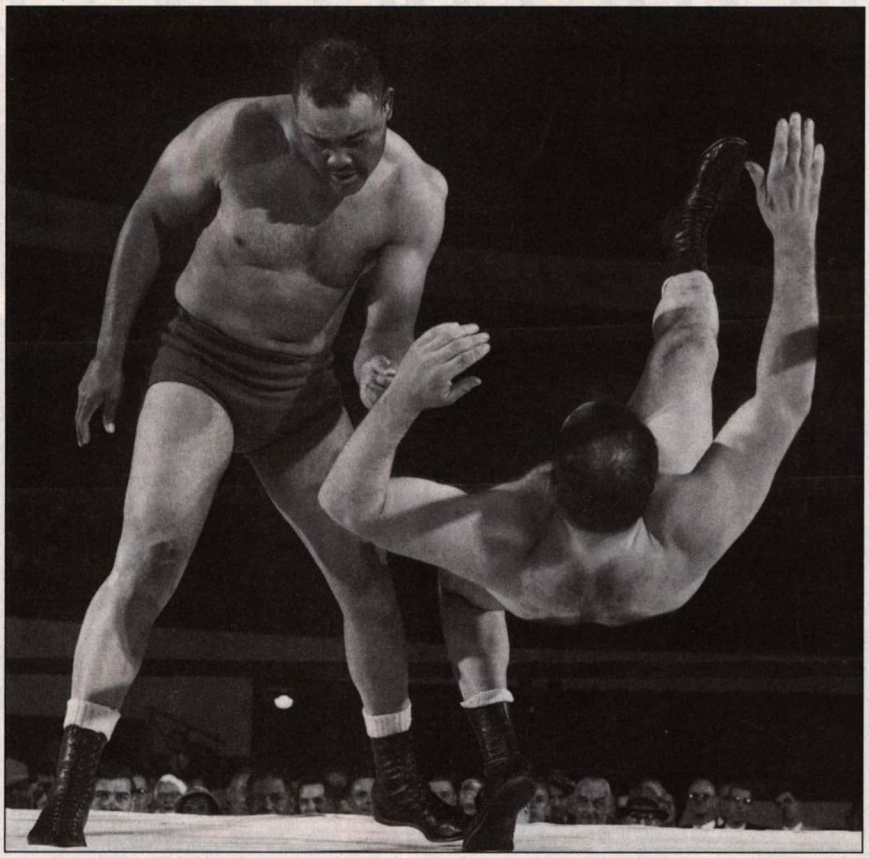
and [Mickey] Mantle would have been shredded if the media were like that years ago."

He's right. It wasn't until years after their careers were over that the public learned Mantle was an abusive alcoholic, Ruth a womanizer and unrepentant partier, Louis an inveterate gambler, and Robinson at best an indifferent father and lousy husband. Rocky Marciano was a paranoid penny-pincher, Bing Crosby a bastard of a father, and Henry Fonda a cold fish. Dick Van Dyke was drunk around the clock and Sinatra allegedly had all kinds of ties to organized crime.

It is perhaps Holyfield's misfortune that he is alive during a time when his every misstep is reported, even if they are not editorialized the way they would be if he were someone else. It is to his credit, of course, that he is loved the way he is by the boxing world, and not just because he knows how to shake hands and smile. It's also how he comported himself in the ring that buys him so much slack.

"When a guy has given as much of himself in the ring as Holyfield has, people are more forgiving in general," Tremblay said. "[Arturo] Gatti is a good example. The media could have treated him more harshly, but because of the respect he earned in the ring they held back some."

That works too. The press was largely forgiving of Ray Leonard when it became known in the early 1990s that he drank heavily and used cocaine leading up to his divorce from wife and high school sweetheart Juanita Leonard. In fact, Leonard's ability to emerge entirely unscathed from such revelations rivals Holyfield's record, and they share two apparently necessary attributes: a celebrated ring history and impressive charisma.



Former heavyweight champion Joe Louis was so beloved that even an unseemly stint as a professional wrestler did not diminish his popularity. Louis was also an inveterate gambler who lost a fortune playing golf.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Holyfield is certainly not the only contemporary boxing star whose personal life does not always match his public persona. Ray Leonard also emerged unscathed from a few personal peccadilloes.

Boxing fans, however, despite their stated enmity toward the use of performance-enhancing drugs, are by all evidence forgiving of it when their favorites are shown to have indulged. Shane Mosley, Fernando Vargas, and James Toney each have been caught, Toney more than once. Their careers did not suffer as a result. Mosley and Vargas especially, who always have been fan favorites, just like Holyfield, suffered no permanent damage whatsoever, just like Holyfield.

We tend to think our heroes are as adept at life as they are at their chosen performance art. They are not. The most successful fighters frequently are a mess in life, and the same can be said of great artists, writers, musicians, scientists, and the rest. Genius in one form does not always translate to others. Many times the opposite is true. This may be the case with Holyfield, and we should endeavor to see him as we see ourselves and all humans—profoundly unique and profoundly flawed. ■

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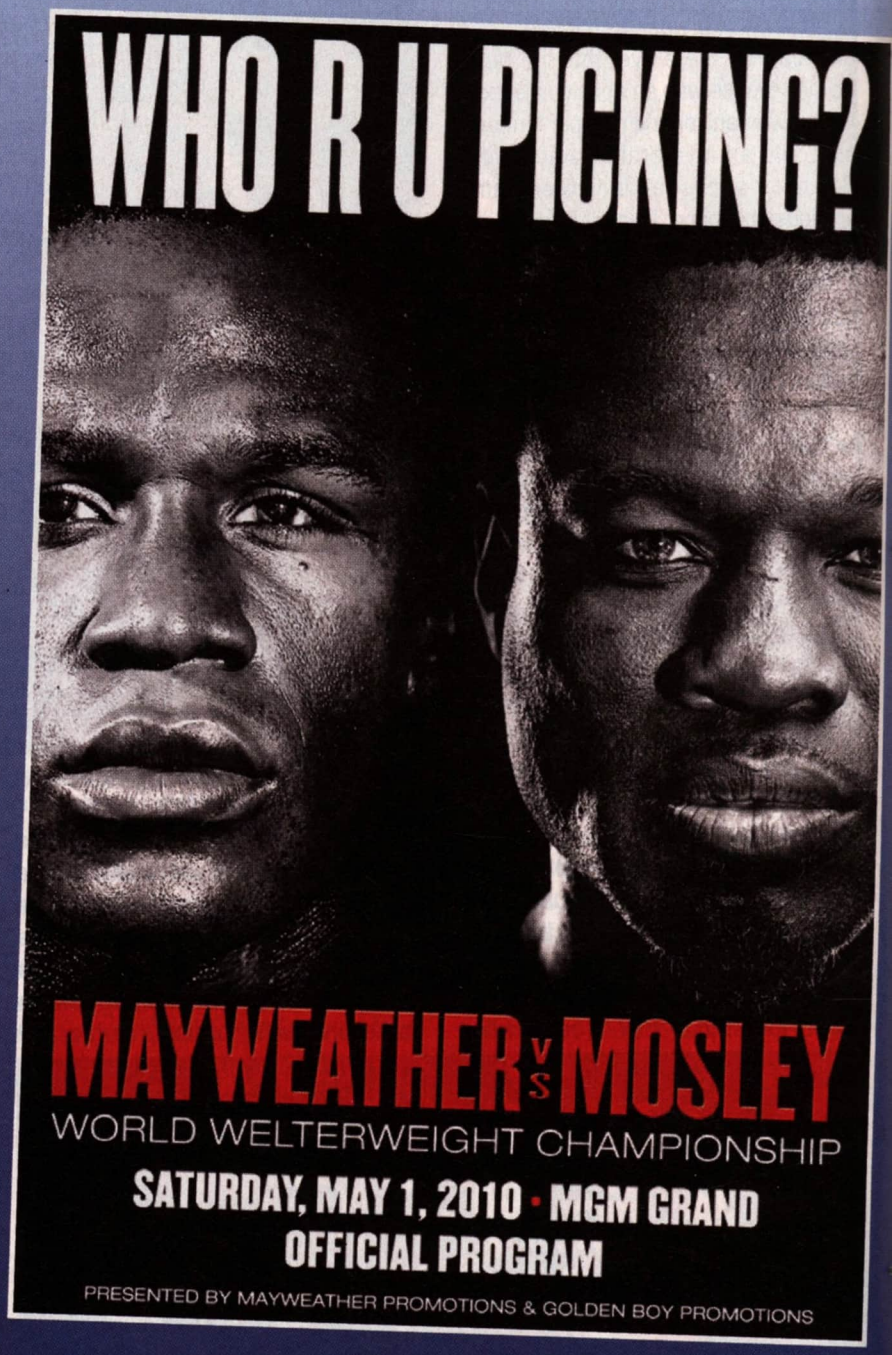

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CROWD PLEASERS

The Ring Ranks Today's Top 10 Most Exciting Fighters

By Eric Raskin

There are no stats to measure how exciting a fighter is. There's not much you point to that quantifies any argument over whether Fighter A is more entertaining than Fighter B. If we want to debate whether the greatest fighter of all-time is Sugar Ray Robinson, Henry Armstrong, Willie Pep, or Muhammad Ali, we can analyze wins and losses, title defenses, etc., to support our positions. But if we want to discuss who was the most entertaining between Rocky Marciano, Carmen Basilio, Matthew Saad Muhammad, and Arturo Gatti, well, all we can really go on is what we saw with our eyes and what we feel in our hearts.

Almost any ranking in boxing requires some degree of subjectivity. Ranking the most exciting fighters in the world is *pure* subjectivity. So in the end, putting this list together came down in large part to the answer to a simple question: When you hear a certain fighter is going to be in action, how excited do you get to watch him?

We've asked ourselves that question, along with a few others: How many great fights has he been in? Does he have a flair for the dramatic? Does he produce a dud from time to time? The answers gave way to the list that follows, our ranking of the 10 most exciting fighters in the game today:

1. Israel Vazquez

Vazquez bounces a right off Rafael Marquez' chin

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

What Makes Him So Exciting: Take your pick—the cuts around his eyes that open up while he's getting his hands wrapped, the frequency with which he gets knocked down and then gets back up, the way he blends world-class skill with a willingness to absorb punishment in order to land his kayo blasts. In a word, Vazquez oozes drama. His fights follow story arcs. Vazquez has been in two Ring Fights of the Year (his second and third fights with Rafael Marquez) and three honorable mentions (his second fight with Oscar Larios, his come-from-behind win over Jhonny Gonzalez, and the first Marquez fight). And now at age 32, he's slowed down to the point where even a tuneup against a journeyman like Angel Priolo becomes a blood-spilling tightrope walk.

Most Exciting Fight: There's a lot to choose from on his resume, but you have to lean toward the third Marquez fight. After 11 spectacular rounds, Vazquez needed a knockdown to win it and got one with about five seconds left on the clock.

Capable Of A Stinker?: There isn't a single one we can recall. About the only criticism you can direct his way is that he waved the white flag with a badly broken nose in the first Marquez fight, meaning he only scores a 99 out of 100 in the heart category.

The Ultimate In Excitement: The dream action fight for Vazquez is already signed, the fourth go-round with Marquez. No two styles have ever meshed more perfectly.

2. Manny Pacquiao

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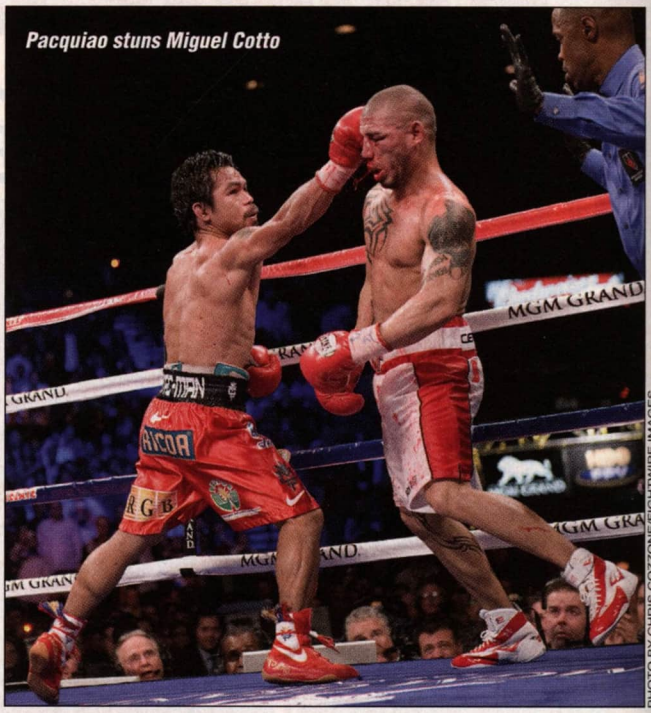

Pacquiao stuns Miguel Cotto

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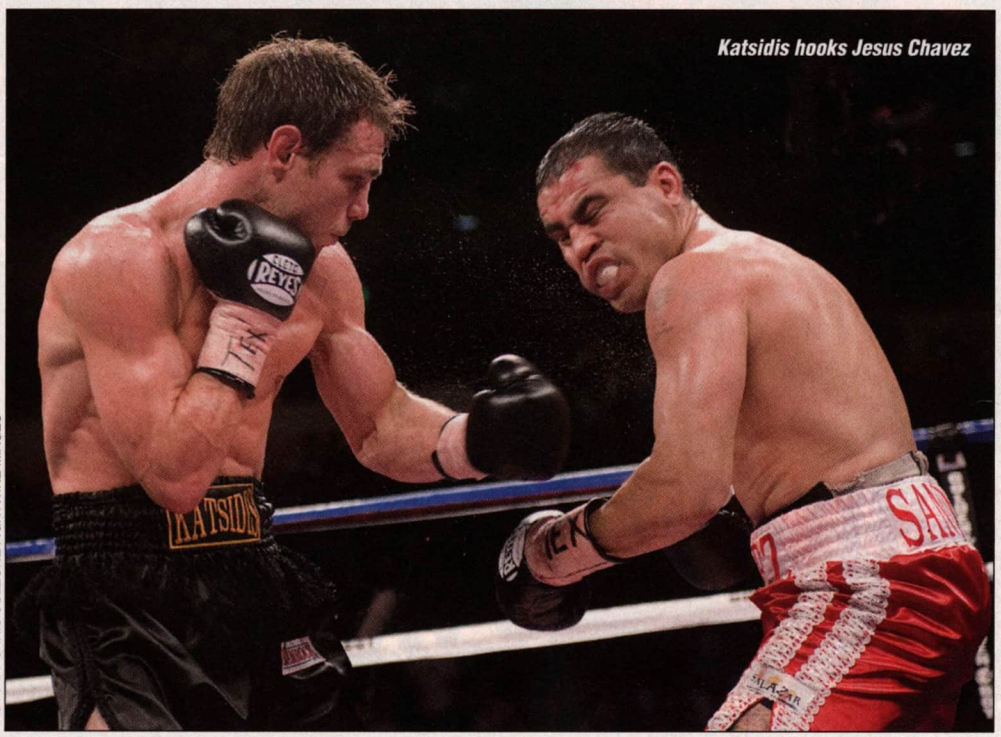

Katsidis hooks Jesus Chavez

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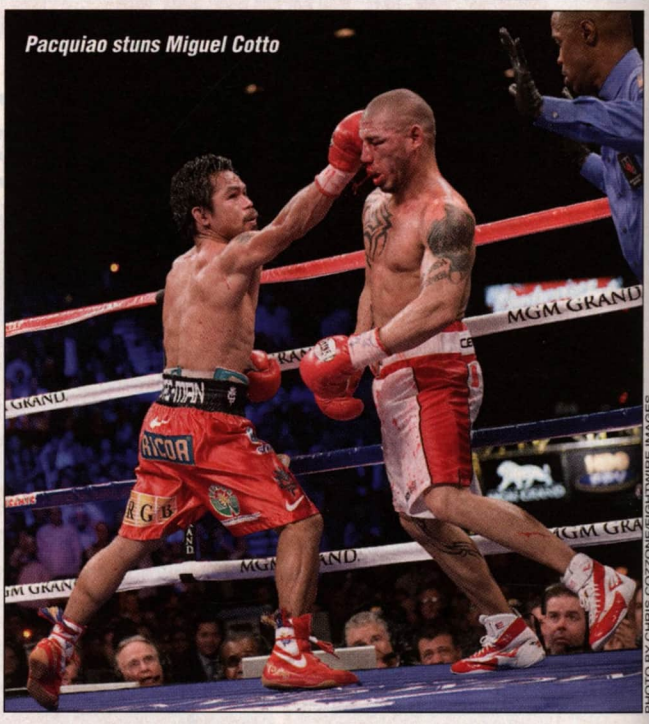

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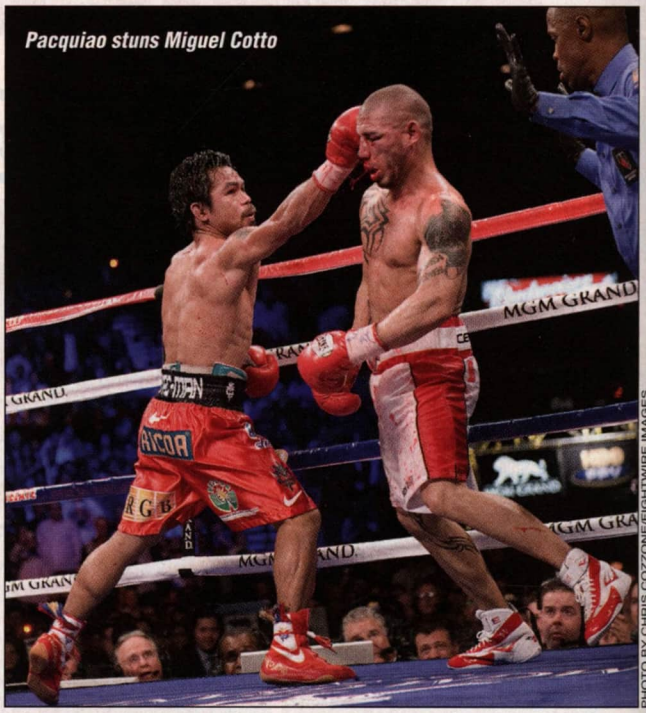

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6. Yuriorkis Gamboa

What Makes Him So Exciting: Gamboa balances that "he's so extraordinarily athletic that I'm perpetually in awe" appeal with an air of vulnerability. This is a little bit of an overstatement, but it's like if you had both the offense of 1965 Muhammad Ali and the defense of 1975 Ali ... with the chin of Floyd Patterson. When a guy suffered knockdowns in four of his first 13 fights and is considered to be knocking on the door of the pound-for-pound list anyway, he qualifies as must-see TV.

Most Exciting Fight: His HBO bout against undefeated Marcos Ramirez was explosive and fun for the two rounds it lasted, with Gamboa rising from a first-round knockdown to floor Ramirez twice in the second.

Capable Of A Stinker?: The Cuban has certainly had fights that dragged in spots. And if he ever meets the Edwin Rosario to his Hector Camacho or the Kevin Kelley to his Naseem Hamed, it could kill the fun altogether.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Gamboa pounds Jose "Cheo" Rojas into a ninth-round TKO victim

The Ultimate In Excitement: It has to be the fight promoter Bob Arum is building toward, Gamboa vs. Juan Manuel Lopez. Let's just hope Bob knows when to stop building.

7. Rafael Marquez

What Makes Him So Exciting: A skeptic might say it's Israel Vazquez that makes him exciting. And to a certain extent, that's true. There's a reason Vazquez is number one on this list while the other 50 percent of the Vazquez-Marquez equation comes in at number seven. But Marquez had some darn good fights on his own, against the likes of Mark Johnson and Tim Austin. His skills and technique have always been aesthetically pleasing. And as he's slowed down with age and been forced to show his heart, the entertainment has gone to the next level.

Most Exciting Fight: If the third fight with Vazquez was "El Magnifico's" best, then it was Marquez' best too.

Capable Of A Stinker?: Maybe in his prime there were opponents who couldn't challenge him enough to create drama, but nowadays, we don't see much chance of a Marquez fight boring us.

The Ultimate In Excitement: Again, what's good enough for Vazquez is good enough for Marquez. Their fourth fight should be another Fight of the Year candidate.

Marquez digs to Israel Vazquez' body

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

8. Giovanni Segura

What Makes Him So Exciting: If you like a flawed fighter with a fearsome punch, the 108-pound Segura is your man. He didn't start fighting until he was 19 and had only 15 amateur bouts, but what he lacks in experience and technical prowess, he makes up for with desire and chilling power. Segura knows he isn't going to outbox anyone, so he finds a way to force opponents to trade with him and fight on his terms.

Most Exciting Fight: Both of his fights with Cesar Canchila were nonstop fun, but the second one was perhaps slightly better because it ended in a knockout. Certainly Segura, who lost the first bout but won the rematch, would say he enjoyed the second fight more.

Capable Of A Stinker?: It doesn't seem likely. But the fight Segura wants is against cutie Ivan Calderon, and if the California-based Mexican can't impose his will on "Iron Boy," it could be a yawner.

The Ultimate In Excitement: If unbeaten strawweight titlist Roman Gonzalez would eat an extra Twinkie or two and move up to junior fly, it could give us the division's best slugfest since Michael Carbajal-Chiquita Gonzalez I.

Segura floors Cesar Canchila

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

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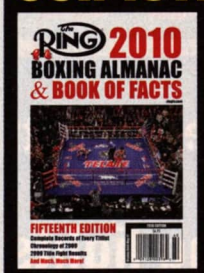

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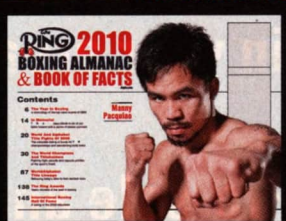

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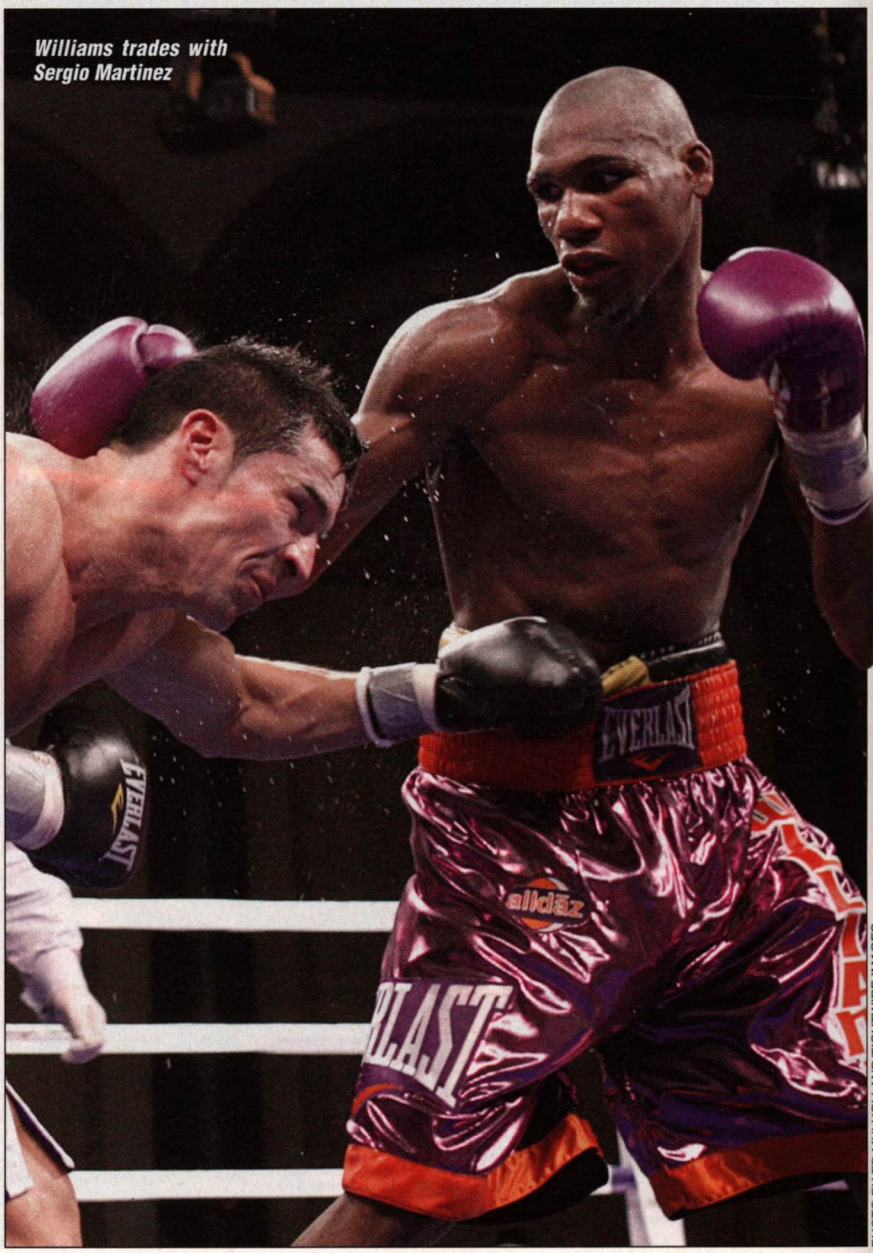
9. Paul Williams

What Makes Him So Exciting: Williams *shouldn't* be exciting. He's a southpaw with about a five-inch height advantage over his average opponent. He should be pecking away from the outside and boring us to death. But he loves to give up real estate and slug it out on the inside, and he'll often throw 100 punches in a round. Williams is avoided by some opponents, but not by TV executives and not by fight fans.

Most Exciting Fight: His win over Antonio Margarito in '07 was good, but not quite as stirring as his back-and-forth battle with Sergio Martinez in '09. They traded knockdowns in the first round and the pace never slowed.

Capable Of A Stinker?: "Stinker" isn't quite the right word, but sometimes he's just too dominant for the fight to keep our interest. Williams boxed well against Winky Wright, but he didn't thrill anyone.

The Ultimate In Excitement: With three divisions' worth of fighters to choose from, there's no lack of options. The best of them would be all-offense middleweight world champ Kelly Pavlik, assuming "The Ghost" gets past Martinez first.



Williams trades with Sergio Martinez

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

10. Antonio Escalante

What Makes Him So Exciting: As a rising prospect in 2007, Escalante had Mauricio Pastrana down and seemingly on the way out, got overly aggressive, and paid the price via shocking knockout defeat. He could have let that turn him into a more careful fighter. He didn't. Escalante still lives to satisfy the crowd's lust for action, and the fans have responded, making him a major ticketseller in his native El Paso, Texas. Whether he's championship caliber or not remains up for debate, but last we checked, this article was a ranking of the most exciting fighters, not the best.

Escalante rocks Miguel Roman with a right

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Most Exciting Fight: In a close call over his '06 Fight of the Year candidate against Jose Hernandez, we like Escalante's recent ESPN2 win over Miguel Roman, which rates to be recognized as a Fight of the Year honorable mention at the end of 2010.

Capable Of A Stinker?: With his fluid style and warrior's mentality, we don't expect him to hear boos too often.

The Ultimate In Excitement: Let's end where we began, with a showdown with the top man on this list, Israel Vazquez. Perhaps that fight would prove to be a symbolic passing of the torch from one boxer-brawler to another. ■

The Next 10 ...

Here is the "honorable mention" list, 10 fighters who just missed the cut (in alphabetical order):

Arthur Abraham

Potent combination of huge heart (beat Edison Miranda with broken jaw) and spectacular knockout power

Tomasz Adamek

Boasts barnburners against Paul Briggs and Steve Cunningham and is now world's most exciting heavyweight

PHOTO BY JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

Alfredo Angulo

Has the perfect offense-minded style to make great fights ... just hasn't actually been in any yet

Jorge Arce

A true fan favorite who's well past his best but has as extensive an action resume as any current fighter

Vic Darchinyan

Out of top 10 on account of awkwardness; in top 20 on account of fearsome power and compelling presence

Carl Froch

Back-to-back thrillers against Jean Pascal and Jermain Taylor proved him more than just a tough talker

Marcos Maidana

Victor Ortiz' surrender was the story, but don't forget who rose from three knockdowns to make him surrender

Juan Manuel Marquez

Used to be a dull counterpuncher, but bouts with Manny Pacquiao and Juan Diaz were classics

Shane Mosley

Inconsistent as an entertainer, but a mesmerizing talent when at his best and matched with a willing opponent

Kelly Pavlik

Whether evenly matched (vs. Jermain Taylor) or in a mismatch (vs. Miguel Espino), guaranteed to give and take

THE STICK AND MOVE

Rehabilitation & Rope-A-Dope At A Louisiana Medium-Security Prison

By John Yargo
PHOTOS BY JASON R. BALL

Its name sounds like an evasion: the B.B. "Sixty" Rayburn Correctional Center. At first appearance, from a dormant pair of train tracks to the south of the facilities, the tangle of low-lying, fenced complexes look a lot like a gray cloud settled in the center of 1,025 fertile acres of former Great Southern Lumber Company timber land. The sign and letterhead remind you that it's a correctional center, not a prison. At an administrator's insistence, you're told to refer to the prisoners

The B.B. "Sixty" Rayburn Correctional Center has featured inmate boxing since 1985, but recent budget cuts have hampered the program. This has been especially tough on inmates, including boxer David Magee and head trainer Michael Wicks (opposite page).

adidas
RINGSIDE

For more than 20 years, the annual "King Of Hearts" inmate boxing show raised money for charity but has been a victim of budget cuts.

as "offenders" and the guards as "correctional officers."

In 1980, when Louisiana decided to expand the state prison system, state Senator and Washington Parish native B.B. Rayburn made a push to make Washington Parish the home of a new prison, bringing with it state jobs and economic stability. The prospects of local industry were flagging and, according to the United States Census Bureau, the parish had a poverty rate of 26 percent in 1979. In an area with extremely low education rates and consistently high poverty rates, that cloudy tangle of wire, cement, and plaster once known as Washington Correctional Institute (or WCI, now named after the prison's early supporter, Rayburn) was considered a benediction.

Despite Rayburn's strong belief in the prison's benefits and a positive vote in a parish-wide referendum, the cities and towns incorporating the parish fiercely debated in whose "backyard" the prison should be located. A local anecdote has the village of Angie chosen as the site because the town's residents voted in favor of it by the widest margin in that referendum.

When the prison began accepting inmates in 1983, WCI's first recreational director, Randy Seal, sought out programs that would divert and channel the frustrations of his wards. Originally funded by inmate welfare funds, the boxing program was underway as early as 1985. In the late-1980s, the inmate boxers fought public matches at Bogalusa High School and the Washington Parish Fairgrounds as well as Louisiana State Penitentiary and Dixon Correctional Institute. Frequently, the matches were underscored with a degree of morbid humor. One inmate announcer prefaced the announcement of results with the line, "A decision has been rendered."

By 1989, an ad hoc committee, the Louisiana Institute Boxing Association, was established to organize and mediate between the 11 member prisons. Composed of prison representatives and a commissioner, it is now the sanctioning body of inmate boxing in Louisiana. With the association coordinating between prisons, boxers were transported for scheduled bouts, usually six or seven per year. The association also installed a unique mix of amateur and professional rules and regulations: Each bout was broken into three, three-minute rounds, and inmates with previous professional experience were disqualified.

For over 20 years, the Rayburn Correctional Center has hosted an annual fight card on Valentine's Day. In the late-1990s, the show was given the grandiose name "The Terry Wood Memorial King of

Hearts Boxing Extravaganza" to replace the more informal name of the event, the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre." The profits from the fight were donated to local charities. But last January, the bouts were canceled as part of a larger mission to cut $1.8-million from the prison's budget.

The Louisiana Institute Boxing Association's current commissioner, Baton Rouge native Jay Canella, was pulled into the association casually while attending a fight at Dixon Correctional Institute in 1992. Billy Roth, his close friend and an official, recognized Canella had some familiarity with the sport and told him, "We need a judge."

Canella admitted that he had never judged a bout. Roth returned, "Have you ever seen a match?"

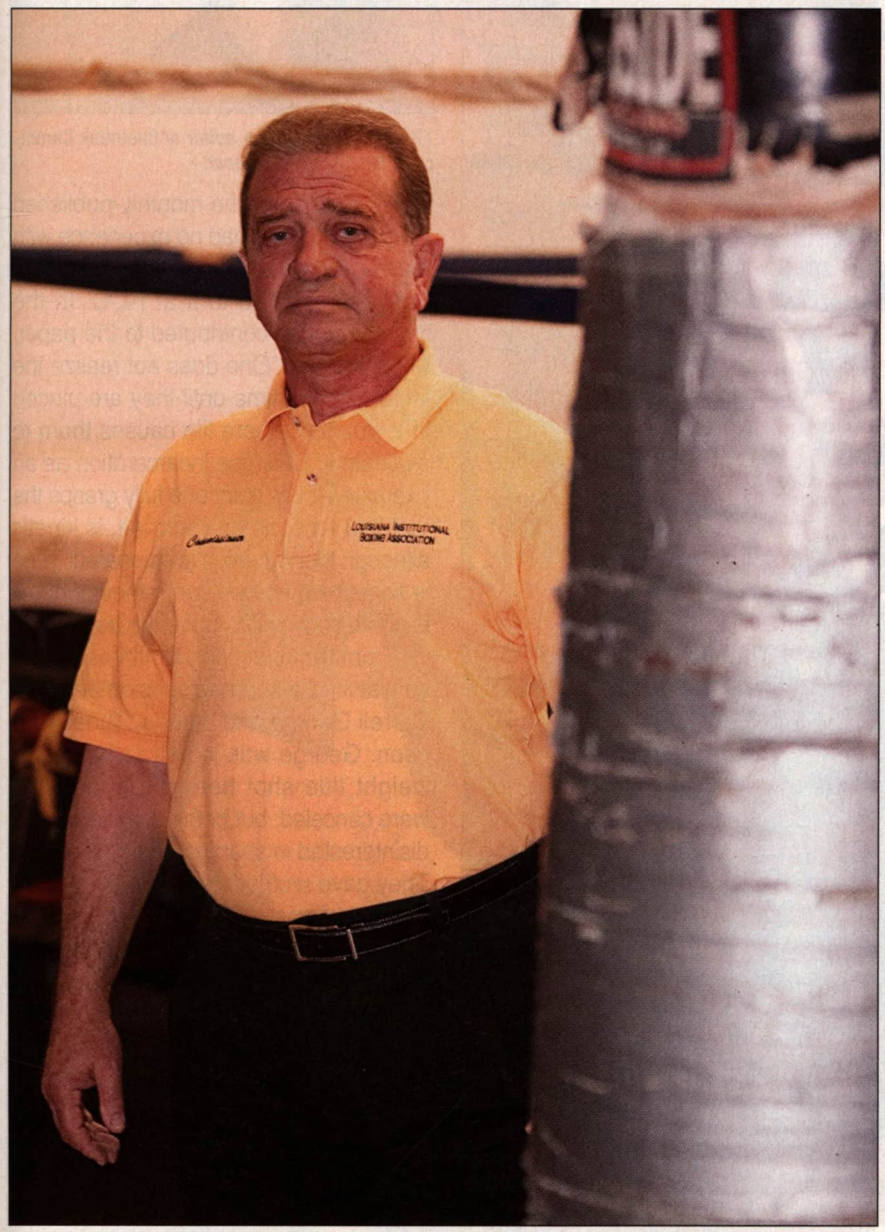
He answered, "Yes."

"That's close enough," said Roth.

Canella relied on Roth during the match, taking his criticism, but soon found himself engaged in the association's inner workings. Within a few years, Canella, feeling inadequate to the task of judging a match, became a certified referee and judge with the Southern Amateur Athletic Union. He pushed for changes to standardize the officiating and judging in the inmate boxing program. Starting in 1995, he coordinated professional referee clinics, showcased training films, and stipulated testing requirements for judges and officials. He keeps a record of all fights in a filing cabinet in his home.

The commissioner's job is now to revive the inter-prison matches, with no prison funding. Canella hopes the association can secure a broadcasting deal with Cox Cable to offset expenses of future matches. Among his other projects, he is also arranging to introduce a welterweight fighter named Damond Brock, who will be released in the next few months, to a professional promoter. That introduction has proved complicated. The promoter wanted to watch a film of Brock, but no one has any footage of any of his fights.

In the curious response of lofty pride and ambivalence that inmate boxers incite, the audio-visual department of Dixon Correctional Institute had incidentally recorded security surveillance over the testimony to his boxing talent.



Louisiana Institute Boxing Association Commissioner Jay Canella is trying to secure a broadcasting deal with Cox Cable to offset expenses of future matches.

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Sergeant Major Damon Smith, the prison's current recreational director, is charged with organizing the boxing program. His responsibilities, when casually summarized, might resemble those of a planning committee and entertainment czar. He considers the position an ideal combination of public work and private interest, and his office evinces an incongruous synthesis of his sports enthusiasms and administrative responsibilities. Pictures of his two daughters—infielders on a Little League softball team in Franklinton—are propped on his desk. Security detail schedules, bureaucratic memos, and a triumphantly oversized poster of LSU's football schedule are pinned to the wall. His job, as he describes it, is to "keep them busy and distract them from the alternative, which is scheming."

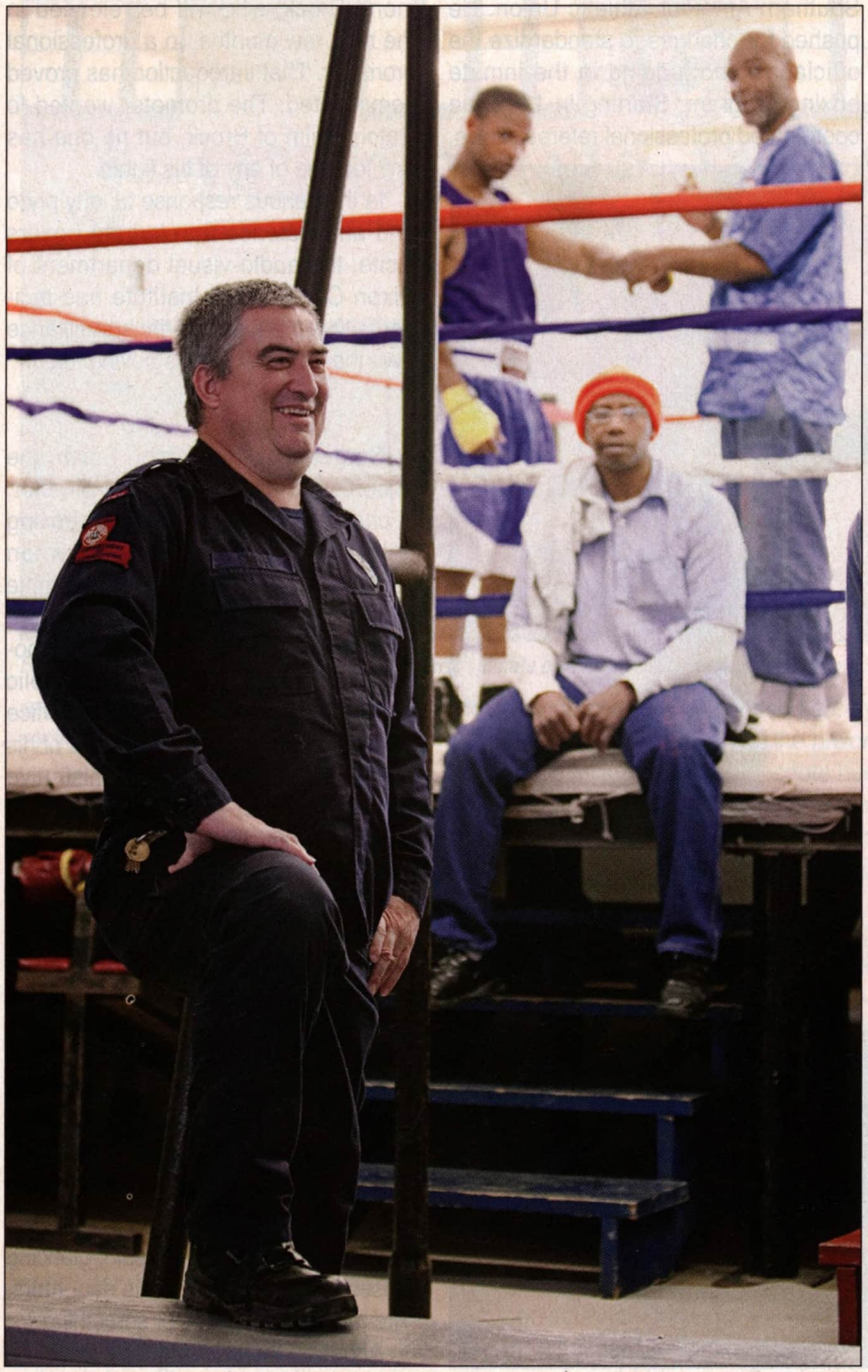
Smith has a convivial and light-handed relationship with the inmates, and he prefers not to know the criminal histories of individual prisoners. "I might find something I don't like," he said, glancing tensely at the pictures of his daughters, "like rape of young girls or something."

Although the prison organizes intramural softball and flag football teams, woodworking, and metallurgical activities,

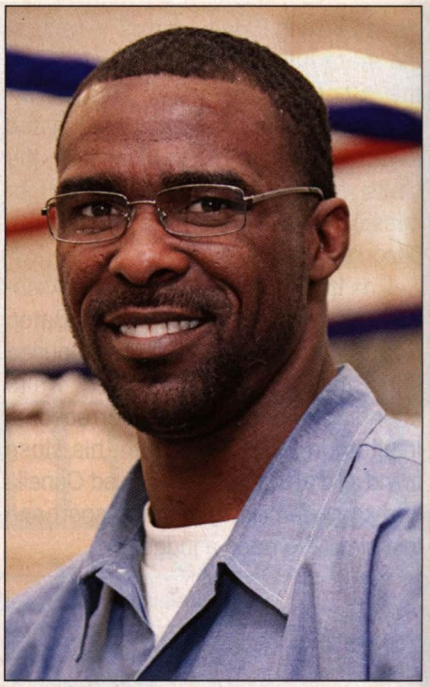
the boxing program is the recreation department's lynchpin. Before the matches were canceled last year, Smith said, Rayburn's boxing team "was on a roll. We would have dominated the heavyweight division." He added that, since the boxers mostly stay out of trouble in order to keep their benefits, training in the prison involves a number of less obvious technical problems. Heavyweight fighters have to spar with super middleweights, which requires adjustment to counter the distinct fighting strategies of other weight classes.

Arriving at the RCC gym, you're met by Courtney M. Moses, the editor of the *Chainlink Chronicle*, the prison's newspaper. Moses dispatched himself to fill in for the staff reporter assigned. As he speaks about the program, he orbits, with a single foot on the ground at any given moment.

With a staff of four, Moses photographs, writes, edits, and designs the layout himself for the monthly-published *Chronicle*. Moses had no experience with journalism before being incarcerated, but he gravitated to it at RCC. In the first column he contributed to the paper, Moses writes: "One does not realize the importance of time until they are placed in a situation where life causes them to evaluate it. Let's use incarceration as an example. At this point one fully grasps the fact that time, as they know it, is kinetic although their situation is stagnated. Time is something no one can retrieve once it is gone, so why not make the best of it?"



Sergeant Major Damon Smith, the prison's current recreational director, enjoys a laugh with members of the prison boxing team.



Courtney Moses is the editor of* Chainlink Chronicles*, the prison newspaper.

From the gym floor, Smith and Moses watched a sparring session between Darrell George and James "Tuna" Harrison. George was in line for a welterweight title shot before the matches were canceled, but both of them seemed disinterested in sparring on this morning. They gave muffled gasps on contact. At the end of one round of sparring, Smith called at them, mockingly, "Are you catfighting your sisters or what?" The other fighters and trainers guffawed.

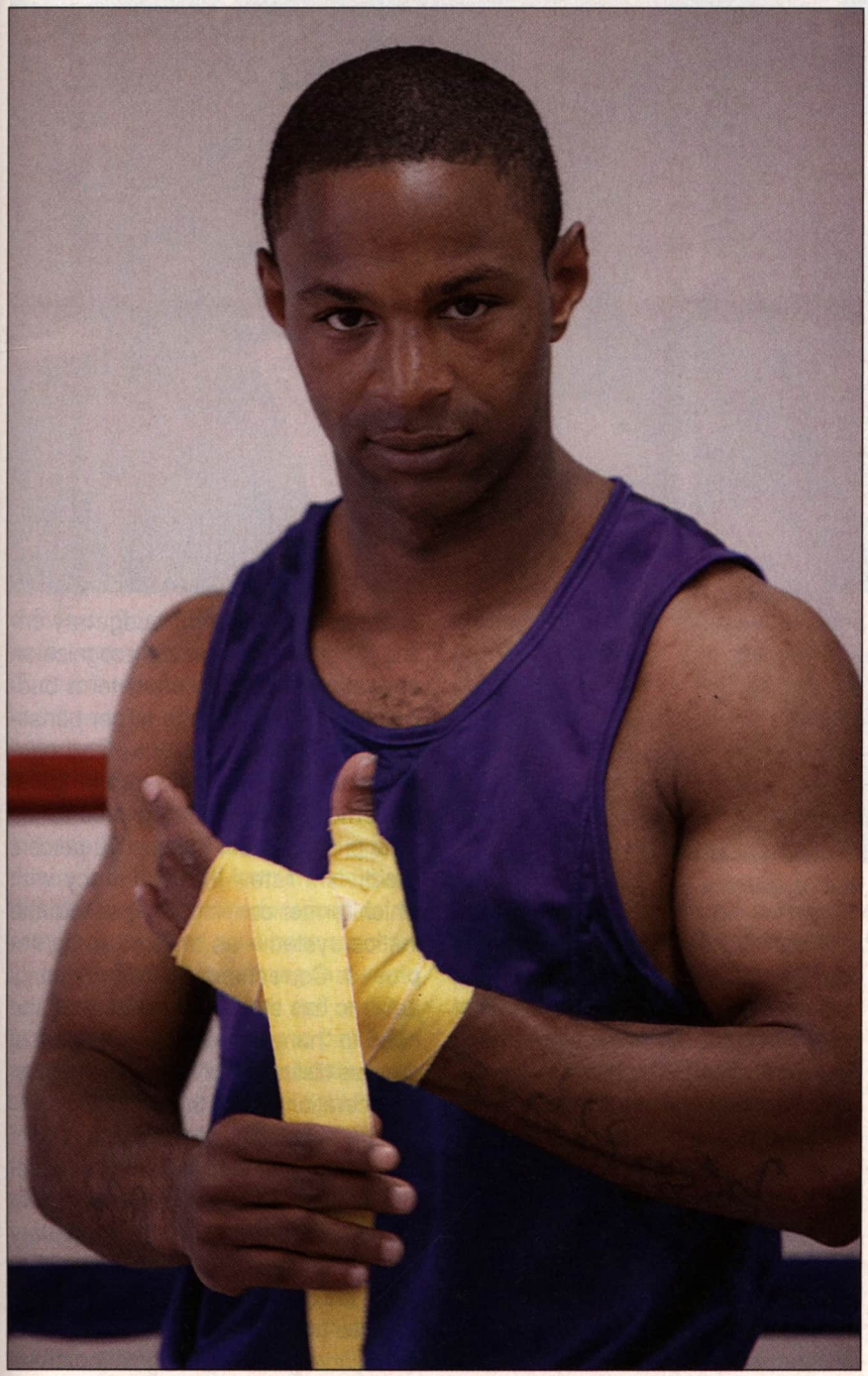
The teasing is light-hearted, but absolutely one-sided. During a pause in the sparring, Smith was asked if he had ever encountered or been contacted by any released prisoners. In the sparsely populated Washington Parish, he had crossed paths with a few released prisoners in grocery stores and

restaurants. When it happened, Smith said, they avoided each other silently, with only vague familiarity.

Harrison, an inside fighter with a squat frame, has learned to box both southpaw and "northpaw." He switches between them freely, to his immediate advantage. He landed solid hits on George, his sparring partner. Harrison is also a "short-timer," which means he'll be released in the next five months. Though Will McIntyre, a Covington police officer, professional boxer, and friend of RCC's program, has arranged to put him in touch with New Orleans-based gyms and managers, Harrison himself is laconic about the subject of his release.

The fighters sparred a few more rounds and then descended from the ring. Moses requested a photograph for the next issue of the *Chronicle*, so a dozen inmate trainers and fighters migrated to the stands for the picture. Apprehensively, they asked Smith if posing is prohibited. He said no. At the flash of the digital camera, the six fighters affected the familiar poses of an old-time marquee: both fists up and heads craned.

Then, the dismissed inmates ambled off to the dormitories and prison yards. Not unlike media-wary athletes, they seemed to share a sense of relief about the genial end of being in the spotlight. They filed down the wide walkways forming the prison's intricate circuitry. Edging the walkways, on the other side of the fenced yards, prisoners were actively cultivating a series of garden patches in the shapes of playing-card suites: hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades. Unfortunately, the themed patches had wilted after a sharp cold spell weeks earlier.



Welterweight Darrell George wraps his hands prior to a training session.

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Weighing 242 pounds, Larry Benoit is a lean, strong fighter, with a 16-5 record in prison. Unlike other boxers in the program, Benoit had no street-fighting experience. But he won the super heavyweight title in 2006, after only 90 days of training. Benoit admits he benefited from weekend competition. All the prisons had temporarily suspended their boxing programs after Hurricane Katrina, so his competitors were rusty, which helped offset the disadvantage of his inexperience.

The team's head trainer, an offender named Michael Wicks, points to Benoit's inexperience as a help to winning his title so quickly. He said, "Street fighters go for those wild punches and all that. I have to strip them from it. You have to break old habits. Benoit learned it all here. He listened."

It also helped that the super heavyweight was not forced into a style that didn't naturally suit him. Wicks develops each boxer under his tutelage in a unique way. "Everyone," he said, "should have their own style." Wicks taught him the combination of elusive footwork and selective jabbing Muhammad Ali made famous. He said, "Benoit's jab and footwork is key. He wants to stick and move, stick and move."

Explaining that the ring is an uncompromising teacher, Benoit further explained, "A boxer learns to listen quickly. The trainer can see things you can't see. You learn to be a follower and rely on your trainer."

David Magee lands a right to Larry Benoit's ribs during a sparring session.

In 1997, Benoit was convicted of armed robbery, his first offense, and he has not been considered for parole since. The first few years at RCC, he gained a reputation as a troubled inmate, picking up a string of minor violations. Training to become a boxer has changed his attitude. "Boxing changed me," he says. "It taught me how to be disciplined and gave me a way to pass the time. You look forward to letting out your frustration in training."

If he had a choice between fighting at RCC and at an unfamiliar location, Benoit preferred the latter. He relished being on unfamiliar ground, being the detested outsider. "When the time of the fight gets there, the crowd is there. The whole crowd is against you. The crowd hates you. When you know they're all against you, you leave it all in the ring. It makes me perform better. The atmosphere is different. The air is different."

Because the Association has ceased competitions, Benoit will remain its super heavyweight champion for the foreseeable future. In addition to sparring and training with teammates, Benoit has focused on registering and taking business administration courses at the Louisiana Technical College satellite location in the prison. And he wants to shed a nickname he picked up as a free civilian, "Big Stupid."

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In early January, Administrative Warden William Gerald Lebo was still trying to close the prison's budget shortfall of $1.8-million for the fiscal year ending June 2010. The prison has cut all travel expenses, some temporary and full-time staff, sold non-essential assets (such as horses), and attempted to standardize the menus. Compounding the problem are overdue employee merit increases, which totaled about $400,000 last year. The Terry Wood Memorial King of Hearts Boxing Extravaganza was an early, and obvious, casualty. Other recreational programs are being cut too.

Despite the current budgetary crisis, prison administrators recognize an obligation to set the short-term budget shortfall against the larger consequences of cutting re-entry and educational programs. In March of 2009, Governor Bobby Jindal pointed to the state prison system's almost 50-percent recidivism rate—the frequency with which former convicts relapse into the justice system—as an area to be improved. Corrections Secretary Jimmy Leblanc has steadfastly reinforced the need to "hammer away at [the state's] dubious distinction of having the highest incarceration rate in the world."

The possibility of recidivism stalks almost every effort at rehabilitation. Specifically, prison boxing and recidivism are intimately linked in the exemplary case of Clifford "The Black Rhino" Etienne, the boxer trained at The Farm that reached boxing's professional pinnacle. After serving a stint in Angola for armed robbery, Etienne eventually managed to

land a match in Memphis against Mike Tyson, as well as a $1-million purse.

Canella, who was an official when Etienne was an inmate at Angola, followed his professional career closely. "Etienne has everything going for him. He was promotable and clean-cut and skilled. But he looked out-of-shape in a loss [to Fres Oquendo] before the Tyson fight. At the Tyson fight, he looked psychologically intimidated. When he hit the mat in the first 40 seconds, he took his mouthpiece out and put it in his glove. I heard someone say taking the mouthpiece out was something he learned in prison. We don't teach that. We didn't teach him that. He had conceded the fight. He had given up."

After the first-round knockout by Tyson, Etienne subsequently settled into a career as a minor fighter. Then, in 2006, he was arrested and charged with robbery, carjacking, kidnapping a family, and firing on two policemen during a single, purportedly cocaine-fueled rampage. He is currently serving a 150-year term at the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison, where he will not be allowed to box again.

To close the budget shortfall, some have desperately picked at the programs designed to curb rehabilitation and recidivism. Soon after the budget cuts were announced last May, the *Chainlink Chronicle* reported that a wry expression had been posted on RCC's bulletin board: "Due to economic conditions, the light at the end of the tunnel will be turned off until further notice."

Lebo, who tries to balance the big picture with the short term crunch, said, "We've tried to not cut educational or re-entry programs and have been successful so far. That is something that could be done later. When you cut re-entry programming, you're going to pay in recidivism." He calls the budget-cutting process a "difficult and stressful fight."

What goes unsaid is that there are few sacred cows in a budget-cutting process at such a bleak moment. A barrage of economic shocks have saddled state prisons with a seemingly insoluble problem. Some of the political and social culprits, among them reactionary shifts in public opinion and governmental policy a generation ago, have stung deeply but unfortunately evaded more sustained consideration.

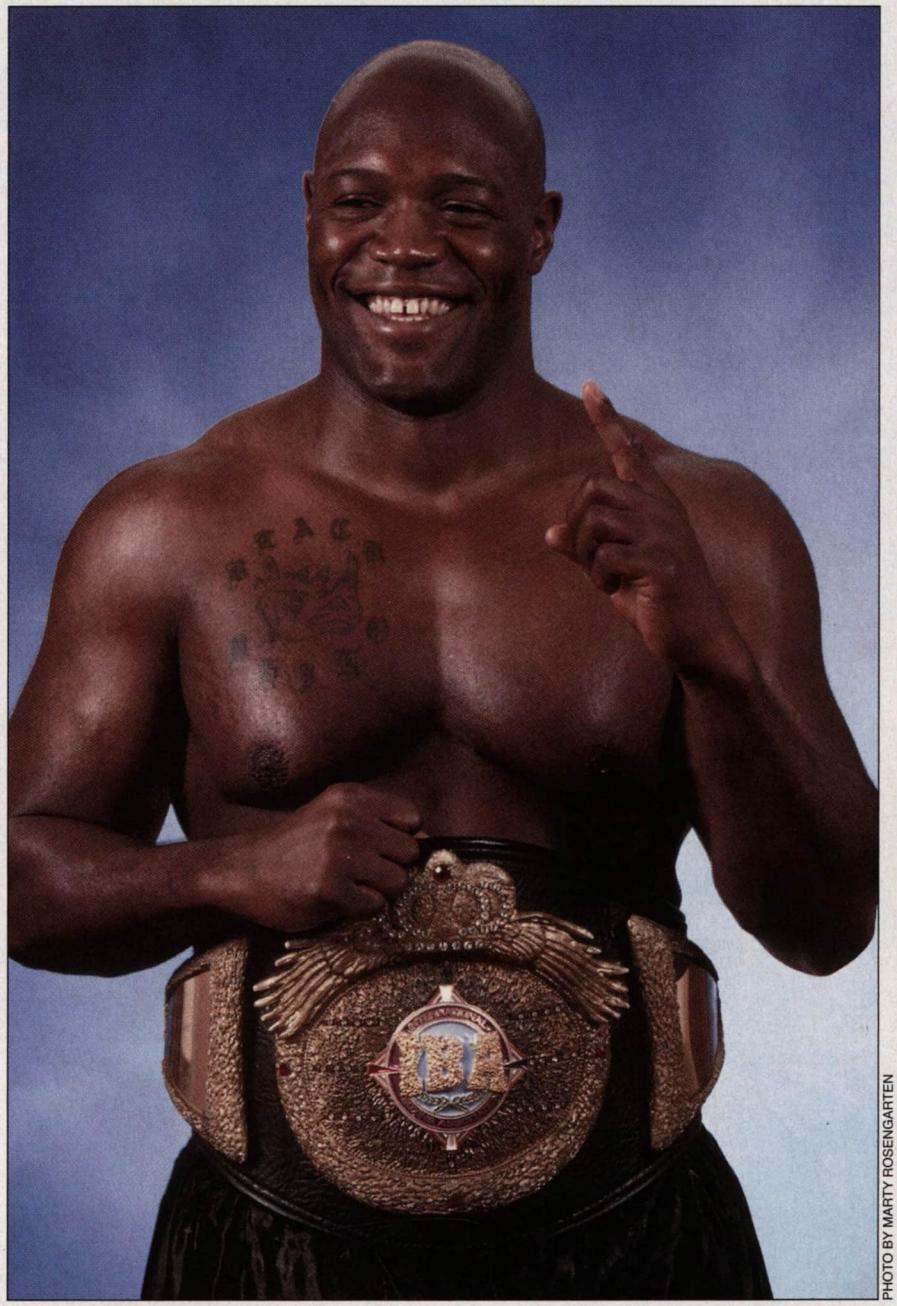


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

After being paroled from Louisiana's Angola Prison, Cliff "Black Rhino" Etienne had a good pro career, but after losing to Mike Tyson his career took a nosedive. Then in 2006, he was arrested on a series of serious charges and is currently serving a 150-year term at the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison.

Coincidentally, as the day was winding down right there at RCC's front gate, an anonymous inmate was being officially released. His stint was up, and he was neatly dressed in a striped shirt and khakis for the occasion. The odd tokens he carried to freedom were rifled through by the front gate's guard and summarily approved. It was a bag of Wonder Bread and a few books. After being cleared, he met his family, who waited from an extended-cab truck parked on the roadside. Emerging from the cab in excitement, a woman embraced him, and then they both piled into the truck's cab. As he pulled himself into the passenger seat, you could faintly read through his shirt the standard printed identification: an abbreviation for the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, "DPSC," and his number. ■

***John Yargo is a sports columnist for the* Jackson Free Press *and manages the sports blog,* The Irregular Season.**

MIXING A GREAT TONIC

Alexander Has A Backstory And The Talent To Go With It

By Don Stradley

PHOTOS BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Devon Alexander has been blessed with something more than quick hands; he's been blessed with a story.

Ever since Ray Leonard won America's heart by taping a picture of his son to his boot at the 1976 Olympics, fighters with good stories have been like catnip for the media. Alexander is undoubtedly a good fighter. His talents were recently showcased on HBO's *Boxing After Dark* where he defeated Juan Urango to unify the IBF and WBC junior welterweight titles. His performance was good enough to guarantee more appearances on HBO—at one point he landed an uppercut that literally lifted Urango off the canvas—but nearly as important as his commanding ring style was the piece on his old St. Louis

Devon Alexander made an important step in his career by doing what no one else had previously accomplished—stopping the rugged Juan Urango. "Alexander The Great" unified the IBF and WBC junior welterweight titles and also made himself a viable player in the talent-rich 140-pound class.

neighborhood that preceded the fight. The footage showed the type of squalor and nastiness that segment producers get boggle-eyed over.

Styles may make fights, but stories make television. Of course, Alexander's tale is common enough, for young men from bad environs have turned to boxing ever since prizefighting was legalized. But Alexander is unusual in that he wasn't some juvenile delinquent who discovered boxing. He wasn't stealing cars or running with gangs. As Alexander's trainer Kevin Cunningham told us, "Devon had dignity."

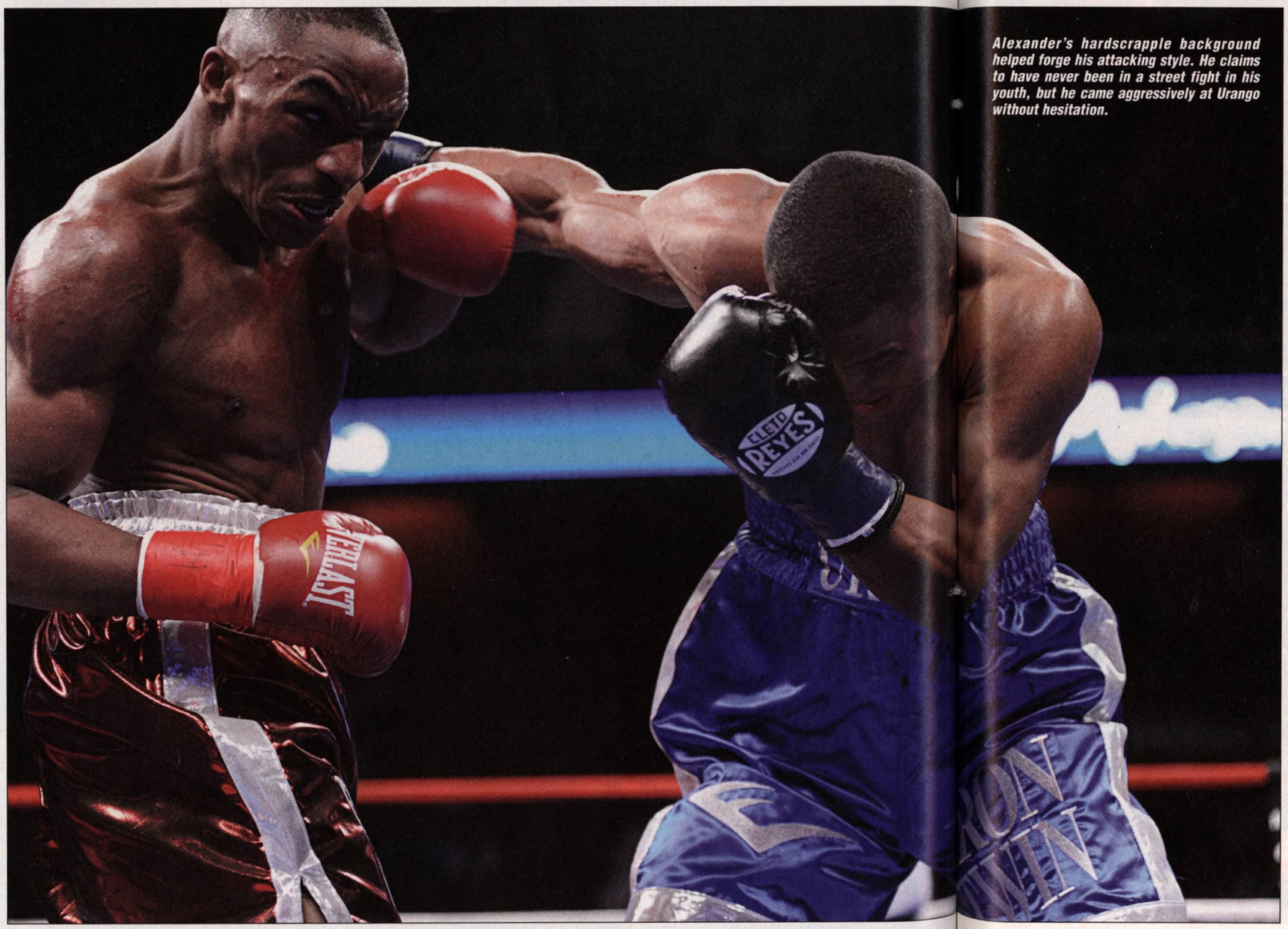
The boy now known as "Alexander The Great" was a Bible reader, a solid student who sat patiently in Vashon High School, waiting for the afternoon bell to ring so he could head for the boxing gym, his sanctuary away from the mayhem around him.

"Guns, drugs, shootings, killings, I saw all of the worst things," Alexander told THE RING.

One of Alexander's earliest childhood memories is of seeing a dead man on the sidewalk outside his home.

"It was nighttime," Alexander said. "We heard noises outside, so I went to see what was happening. There was a man lying there, in front of the apartment complex. My parents said, 'Get back inside. What are you looking at?' I was so young, I didn't understand what was going on, but in a way, I knew that man was dead."

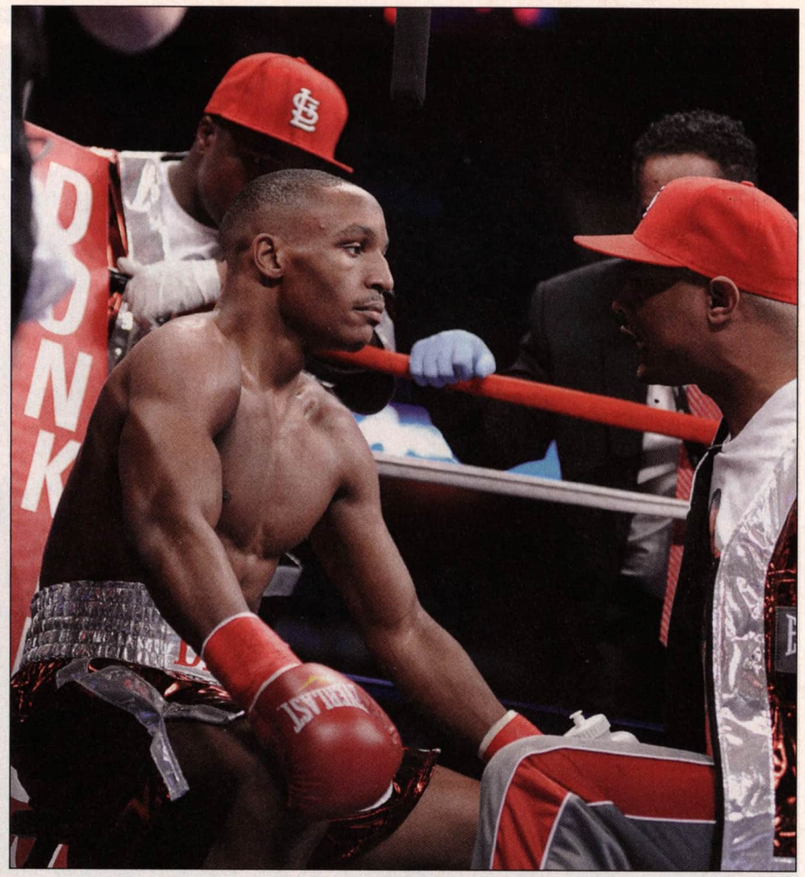
One of 13 siblings, Alexander was brought up in North St. Louis' Hyde Park neighborhood, a depressed section of the city known for boarded up homes, police sirens, and gunfire. Alexander's mother worked as a day-care provider, his father as a grocery store clerk, while rival gangs warred on the streets nearby.



Alexander's hardscrapple background helped forge his attacking style. He claims to have never been in a street fight in his youth, but he came aggressively at Urango without hesitation.

Arson was a problem, too, as the vacant buildings in the neighborhood—some of which were architectural marvels from a bygone era—were torched by vandals.

Although St Louis didn't make *Forbes*' 2009 list of the highest crime cities in America, it is usually ranked in the top three or four in terms of homicides. St. Louis has averaged slightly less than three murders per week for the past several years. The numbers are staggering: 143 in 2009, 167 in 2008. Just a few days before Alexander kayoed Urango, an 18-year-old St. Louis girl was found face down in the street with gunshot



Alexander calls trainer Kevin Cunningham, shown giving him instruction during the Urango fight, an "angel from heaven" for steering him into boxing and away from the harsh streets of North St. Louis.

wounds in her head, back, chest, arms, and hands. She was taken to a hospital where she died. "Three homicides a week is easy" said Cunningham. "There's a lot of poverty here, and poverty makes people desperate."

North St. Louis wasn't always a danger zone. Some believe the downturn began when the I-70 was built in the mid-1950s, splitting the residents from their industrial workplaces. By 1981, the city had fallen so far that parts of it were used as a backdrop for *Escape from New York*, a film depicting post-apocalyptic ruin. Curtis Sliwa's citizen protection group, The Guardian Angels, have recently taken steps to establish a chapter in Hyde Park. A previous St. Louis stint in the 1990s saw the death of six Angels, who patrol unarmed. Sliwa said his group was there to again combat the area's "Dope-sucking, psychopathic, killing machines."

Coming from this background provides Alexander with the kind of shorthand prized by TV producers, promoters, and boxing writers. Kelly Pavlik has the decline of Youngstown; Manny Pacquiao has the poverty of the Philippines; and Devon Alexander has the urban battlefields of North St. Louis. He'll always be known as the sweet-natured young man who avoided disaster.

But disaster was always nearby.

As a seven-year-old beginner, Alexander's first opponent in Cunningham's Hyde Park boxing program was another local kid, Terrance Barker. Barker grew up to be a pretty good amateur fighter. Barker is now dead. So is Willie Ross, another one of Alexander's boxing buddies. Ross was shot to death in September 2008, not far from the gym. Alexander estimates eight of the boys who started with him have been killed. Another 10 have done time in prison, including Alexander's brother, Vaughn. Once a promising fighter in his own right, Vaughn is currently serving an 18-year sentence for robbery and assaulting an officer. Another brother, Lamar, boxed

briefly and now serves as an assistant trainer at Cunningham's gym.

Under the tutelage of Cunningham, whom Alexander calls "an angel from heaven," Alexander has become one of the bright new faces of boxing. While still in high school, Alexander traveled the world, enjoying an illustrious amateur career that included 300 victories. In '08, his fourth year as a professional, Alexander gained attention by winning an easy 12-round decision over veteran DeMarcus Corley at Madison Square Garden on the undercard of Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad. In '09, Alexander reached another milestone by stopping the highly touted Junior Witter for the vacant WBC 140-pound title on Showtime.

Southpaw Alexander is candid about wanting to add more dimensions to his attack, more body punching, and more

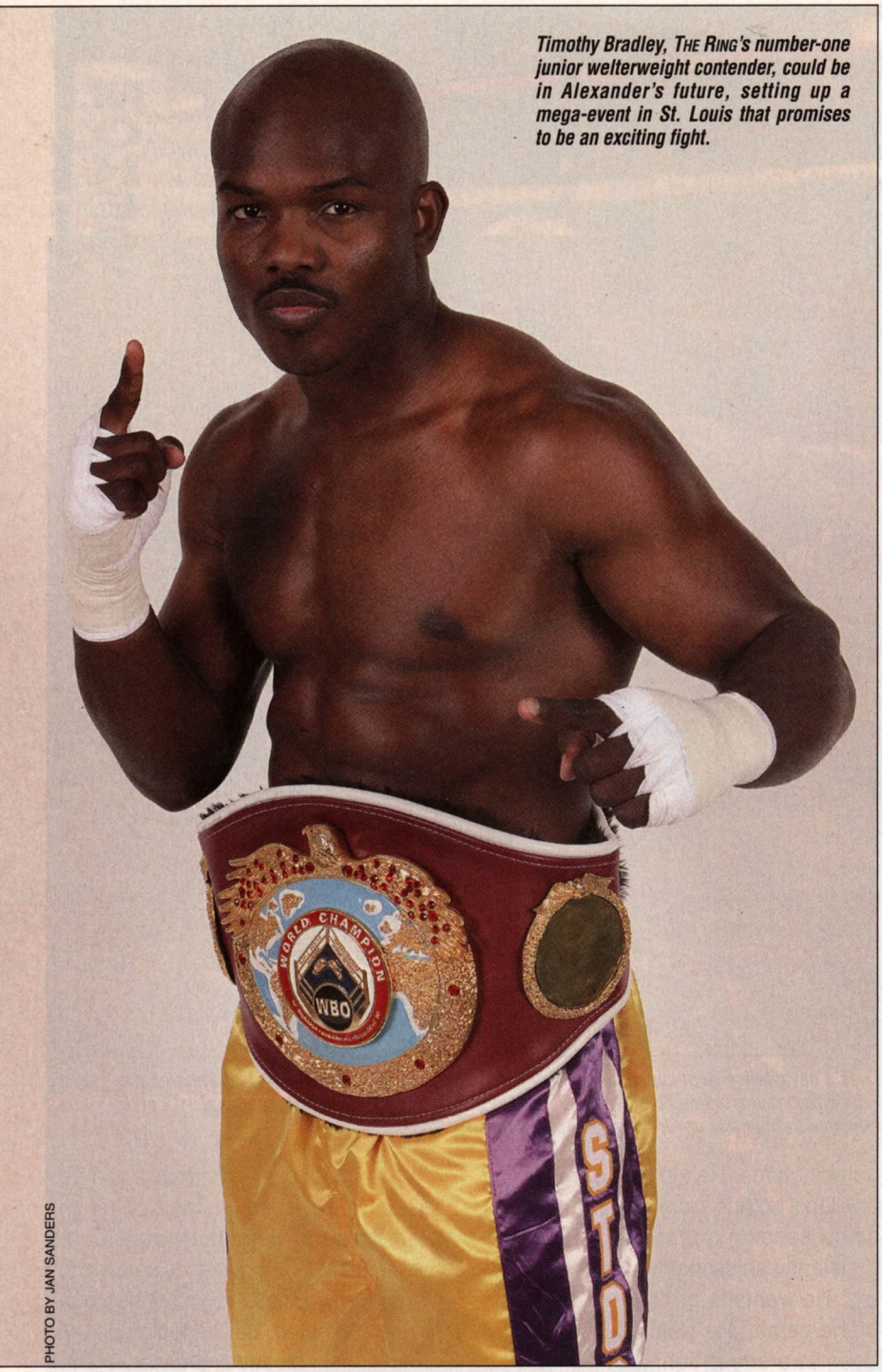
It was a devastating right uppercut that spelled the end for Urango (left), who was knocked down twice in the eighth round (above) before referee Benjy Esteves intervened and stopped it at 1:12 of the round. A stunned Urango was never down let alone stopped in 26 pro fights.

combinations. He's proud of his ability to blend boxing from the outside with some banging on the inside, but he's constantly adjusting, learning from others. He wants to be "one of the greats of the game." He claims to have never been in a street fight, but he must've picked up a bit of the streets by osmosis, because he's not afraid to mix it up in the ring. "He's a slick, smart, boxer-puncher," Cunningham told THE RING. "I see a little bit of Henry Armstrong and Sugar Ray Robinson in him; he's a throwback."

Urango, 22-3-1 (17), a relentless Colombian fighter, gave Alexander a test in their March bout at the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut. Alexander, 20-0 (13), controlled the bout with his jab and some lacerating one-twos, but Urango never stopped pressing, lashing at Alexander with right hooks. Alexander turned up the heat in the eighth, dropping Urango twice. Urango beat the count both times, but the look in his eyes convinced referee Benjy Estevez to stop the bout. Urango protested, but he looked like a beaten fighter, bloody and dazed.

"I'm just now grasping what I did," said Alexander. "I was lying in my bed a day after the fight and I thought, 'Damn, I knocked out Juan Urango.' He's never been stopped; he's hardly been hurt, except by Randall Bailey, and Bailey hits like dynamite."

Alexander, 23, could become a bigger attraction than St. Louis' last big name fighter, Cory Spinks. While still a teenager, Alexander fought on the undercards of Spinks' major St. Louis bouts at The Savvis Center. Hearing the roar of 22,000



Timothy Bradley, THE RING's number-one junior welterweight contender, could be in Alexander's future, setting up a mega-event in St. Louis that promises to be an exciting fight.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

locals was an experience Alexander still gets excited about. "Cory opened the door for me; I loved it," he said.

It's not inconceivable that Alexander could one day headline a Savvis Center show against Timothy Bradley and challenge the attendance record set when Spinks fought Zab Judah in '05. As of press time, THE RING recognized Pacquiao as junior welterweight world champion, while Bradley is the number-one contender. With barely a matchbook separating them, Alexander is number two.

"Devon and Bradley will be a very big fight," said Cunningham. "But I don't want to rush. Let them both get another nice win, build it up for later." Cunningham has someone in mind for Alexander's next opponent. "Judah has already said he'll come down to 140. People in St. Louis would line up for that one," Cunningham said.

"There's still a bitter taste in St. Louis from when all those people came out and Zab beat Cory," Alexander said. "So if he wants to try, I'm for it."

In the meantime, Alexander wants to slow down and enjoy some of his accomplishments. He gets so wrapped up in his work that he has to stop and remind himself of what's going on, such as when his promoter, Don King, gave Alexander use of a Nevada estate that was once occupied by Mike Tyson, another youth from a rough background who found fame and fortune through boxing. "Staying in that place was unbelievable," said Alexander. "I don't know how long Tyson lived there, but I could feel the greatness in that house." St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay held the fighter up, extending a key to the city last year as an example for St. Louis' youths to follow. With all of the great things happening in his life, we wondered if Alexander would ever get tired of discussing the bad old days in North St. Louis.

"Yes," he said, choosing his words carefully. "There's such a thing as overdoing it. There can be some over exaggeration. But since people are learning about me for the first time, and this was my first fight on HBO, I expect it. Hey, no one has to remind me of where I come from. I just want to make enough money to put my kids through college, and then put their kids through college. Other than that, I just stay humble. My father, he passed away in 2005, told me always to be humble."

There have been ongoing efforts at revitalization in Hyde Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. The revival will be a long process; the area didn't collapse all at once and can't retain its old glory overnight. Church groups, historical committees, and real estate developers have been butting heads for years over the best way to change and restore the area. Perhaps someday, decades from now, the scary Hyde Park that Alexander knew will be gone, just another ghost of St. Louis.

Alexander is already gone. He recently moved to the suburbs. "I like being where no one can get at me," he said.

At the very least, his children won't be seeing dead bodies on the sidewalk. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

POR LOS QUE SE ATREVEN A SUBIR AL RING

CON CARÁCTER

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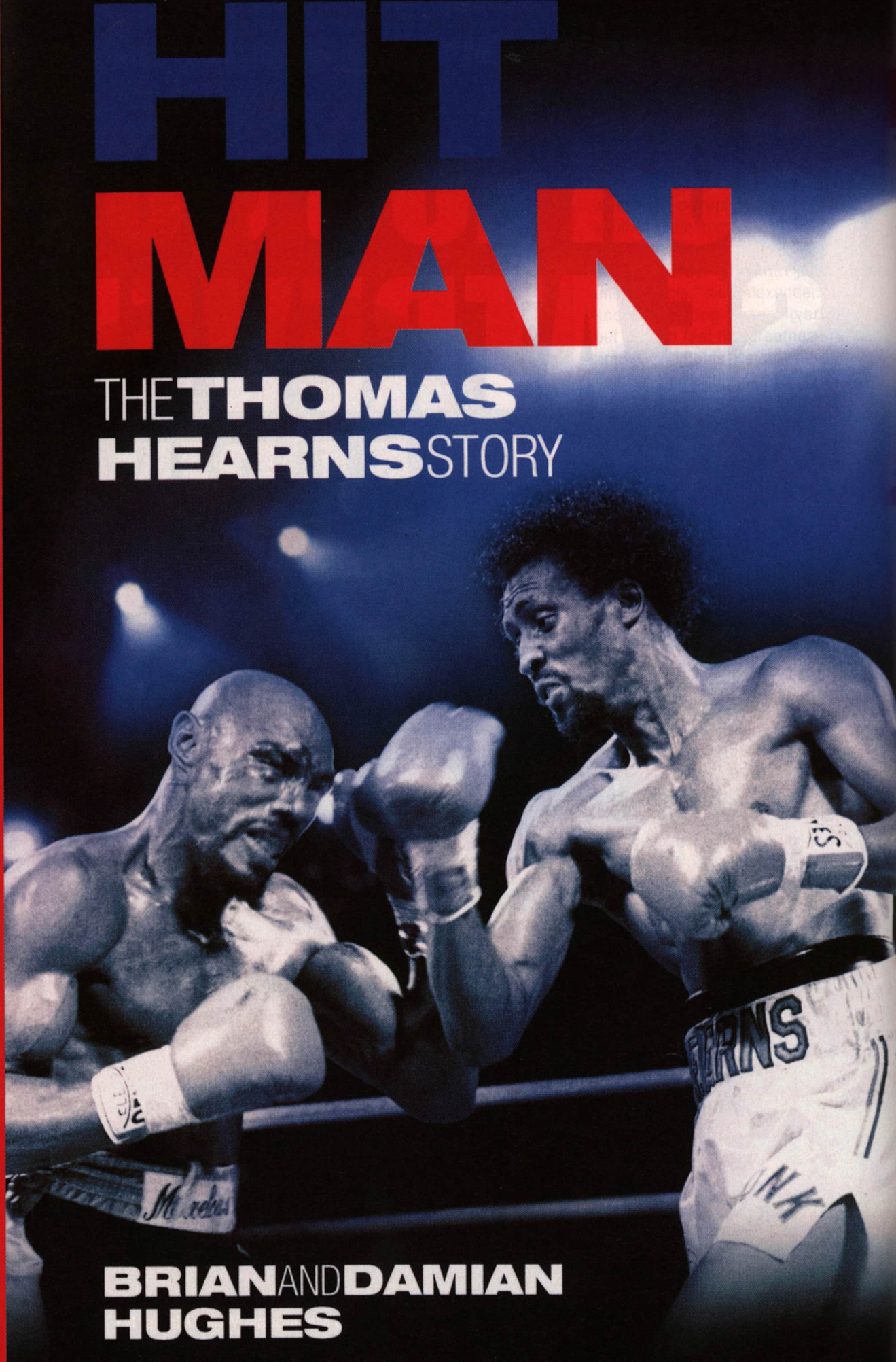
HIT MAN

THE THOMAS HEARNS STORY



BRIAN AND DAMIAN HUGHES

Exclusive Book Excerpt

THE HIT MAN UNLEASHED

By Brian & Damian Hughes

While the new champion's broken hand was taking longer to heal than expected, Emanuel Steward was delving deeper into the internecine world of high-level boxing politics. Steward entered initial negotiations for future fights with Don King, someone he had previously vowed he would never do business with again; Steward had worked with King when promoting his boxer Milton McCrory's fight against the Welshman Colin Jones for the world welterweight title and found the experience deeply unpleasant. At the same time, he met with Bob Arum, King's nemesis. Steward and Arum had previously tried to put on the match between Hagler and Hearns. What did surprise most fight observers, however, was the unlikely alliance between Steward and Mike Trainer, who joined forces with him to enhance the career of Tommy Hearns.

Trainer was the Maryland lawyer who had orchestrated the career of Ray Leonard and helped make him a multi-millionaire, an American idol, and the most popular sports figure in the country. Steward had been impressed that Trainer had been behind the two extremely lucrative Leonard–Duran fights and was equally impressed with his ability to cut through bureaucracy to arrange the Leonard and Hearn's fight, which was then the richest fight in history. Steward was most impressed, however, by Trainer's ability to turn the tables on the powerful promoters. Rather than allow them to select the fighters and make the matches, he chose the promoters he wanted and made them bid against each other to elicit the best deal for his fighter. It seemed obvious for Trainer and Steward to enter an alliance. Trainer explained that his role was to go to the networks and secure a regular schedule of fights for Hearns, which would allow the Kronk team to be more independent. "When Tommy got his purse cut by King before the Benitez fight, he didn't like it," he said. "Hearns is one of the brightest fighters out there and the networks are out there looking for fights. It makes sense to facilitate the two parties."

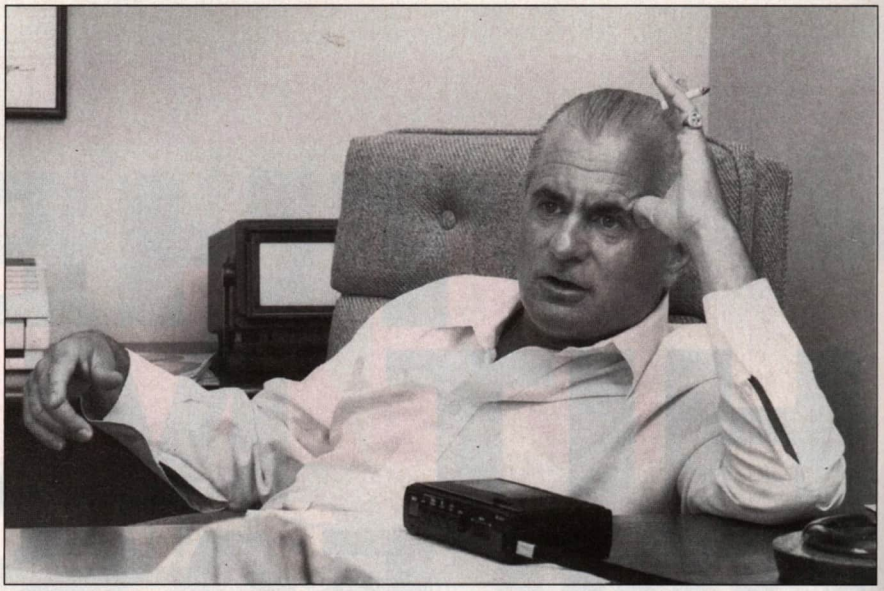
The superfight of 1983 was to be Marvin Hagler versus Roberto Duran, but even before it went ahead there was more speculation about a Hagler–Hearns bonanza in 1984. Hearns needed to keep winning, but his only bout in 1983 was a disappointing 10-round points victory over the light-hitting Murray Sutherland in July. Sutherland, who had twice fought for the light heavyweight title, was a late, over-the-weight substitute for James Green, who was to have challenged Hearns for his junior middleweight title. Some ring rust was inevitable after Hearns' lengthy layoff through injury and he received criticism for not blasting out the Michigan Scot, even though he landed some heavy shots and was in control throughout. "Many in the crowd booed the verdict but this seemed more a matter of sympathy for the underdog than anything," reported *Boxing News*. Hearns knew that after being out of the public eye for so long, he needed to begin 1984 with an impressive performance.

Various opponents were suggested and rejected for a variety of reasons until the name of Luigi Minchillo, known as the "Italian Warrior," came up. Minchillo had won the Italian amateur welterweight title and participated in the 1976 Olympic Games. After the Montreal Games, he was offered the opportunity to turn professional in America, but he declined because he wished to remain in Pesaro with his wife and two young children. He had joined the police force at the age of 18 and forged a respectable career within the ranks while boxing in his spare time. He had put his police career on temporary hold in order to pursue his career and his aggressive, durable style soon began attracting nationwide attention. He had never been knocked down in his 44 professional fights and his only two defeats were to Roberto Duran on a points decision and Alvaro Scarpelli early in his career.

Three months before losing to Duran, Minchillo had won the European junior middleweight championship with a close decision over Louis Acaries. In March 1982, he defended this crown by dominating the former world junior middleweight champion Maurice Hope. He then announced his retirement and declared his intention to return to the police. Only the offer to face Hearns enticed him to return to boxing. "I have the greatest possible respect for Hearns," Minchillo said through his manager and interpreter, Giovanni Branchini. "He is a great, great champion." Minchillo was several inches shorter than Hearns and gave away a lot of reach advantage. He argued that this would allow him to get inside his long reach and use his aggression to stay on top of Hearns for 12 fast rounds. The Italian had won 42 of his 44 professional fights.

The bout was originally scheduled to take place in Las Vegas but the Katz Sports Syndicate, which was going to televise the fight from Caesars Palace, pulled out of negotiations at a late stage. The fight was switched to Detroit's Joe Louis Arena instead and the date was changed from January 27 to February 11. This switch meant that there would be no telecast of the fight in the local area, but this mattered little to Hearns, who was thrilled to return to his hometown for the third time in over 3½ years since winning the welterweight title from [Pipino] Cuevas. Emanuel Steward, who was also preparing Milton McCrory for a title defense against Milton Guest, suggested that the Hearns fight would be a forerunner for regular monthly tournaments to be held at the Joe Louis and Cobo arenas. He had been working with Detroit Mayor Coleman S. Young and the arena owner Mike Ilitich to create a long-term boxing program. The shows would be promoted by Gold Circle Productions, a new company fronted by Bill Kozerski, a Polish-American ally of Steward's.

The plan, however, provoked an outcry when Detroit City Council voted, by a close 5-4 majority, to spend $100,000 to become the official sponsor of the Hearns–Minchillo fight. Mayor Young supported the plan as part of his "Do It In Detroit" campaign to boost the city's bleak image, but dissenting councilmen said the money would be better spent upgrading services in a city with appalling social problems. Howard Cosell, the nation's most recognizable television sports announcer, got in on the act by suggesting that Detroit would be the "laughing stock of the nation" if it spent taxpayers' dollars promoting boxing matches. Mayor Young argued that the funding was an important part in advertising the city to attract extra tourist and convention dollars.



It surprised many industry insiders when Mike Trainer (pictured), who guided Ray Leonard's career, formed an alliance with Hearns' manager/trainer, Emanuel Steward. Nonetheless, the relationship enhanced Hearns' career.

A crowd of 18,500 fans turned up at the Joe Louis Arena to demonstrate that the drawing power of Hearns in his hometown was still as strong as ever. They watched him take a lot longer than anticipated to win by a unanimous decision over 12 rounds against the brave Italian champion. Despite his prefight boasts, Minchillo didn't seem to have any answers to Hearns' long, probing jabs and hooks, right hand leads, and sustained sharp body punching.

Hearns opened with a combination of class and power but early in the second round, he sustained a cut across his right eyelid, which bled profusely until his corner could stem the flow. This was a spur to change up his gears and begin to dictate the tempo of the bout. In the eighth round, he connected with a dizzying combination of lefts and rights to Minchillo's kidneys, forcing him backward, his face contorted in pain. Minchillo did respond with some solid right hands in close, but he failed to deal with Hearns' longer reach. The 10th round ended in confusion as Hearns thought he had heard the bell and began walking back to his corner. His Italian foe thought that Hearns had quit and began celebrating. His victory dance lasted three seconds before Hearns realized his error and resumed the fight. In the 12th round, Hearns opened up and came close to knocking out the robust Italian with a straight right, providing further evidence that his damaged right hand was once again fine.

Although it was a commanding display, Hearns—who would later say it had been his toughest fight, tougher even than Leonard—did show some flaws. Occasionally, Minchillo was able to easily trap him on the ropes, where he was able to nullify the long reach and get close to causing damage. Hearns was almost too eager in his desire to throw right leads off his front foot, instead of positioning his weight behind them. Still, he emerged as a big winner on all three judges' scorecards: Mexico's Abraham Chavarra scored it 120-110, Guy Jutras of Sweden had it 118-109 and Puerto Rico's Cesar Ramos scored it as 120-109.

Hearns declared himself satisfied: "I am pleased with my performance and the fact that my right hand held up all the way. Minchillo is a person who is able to take a lot of punches," he said. "I landed lots of shots and he just kept taking them all."

Emanuel Steward, however, was not so easily pleased. He told aides that

Hearns had lacked stamina and his legs were gone in the last five rounds. And he told Hearns that he would need to improve before he faced Roberto Duran in the summer months, a fight for which negotiations were already well advanced.

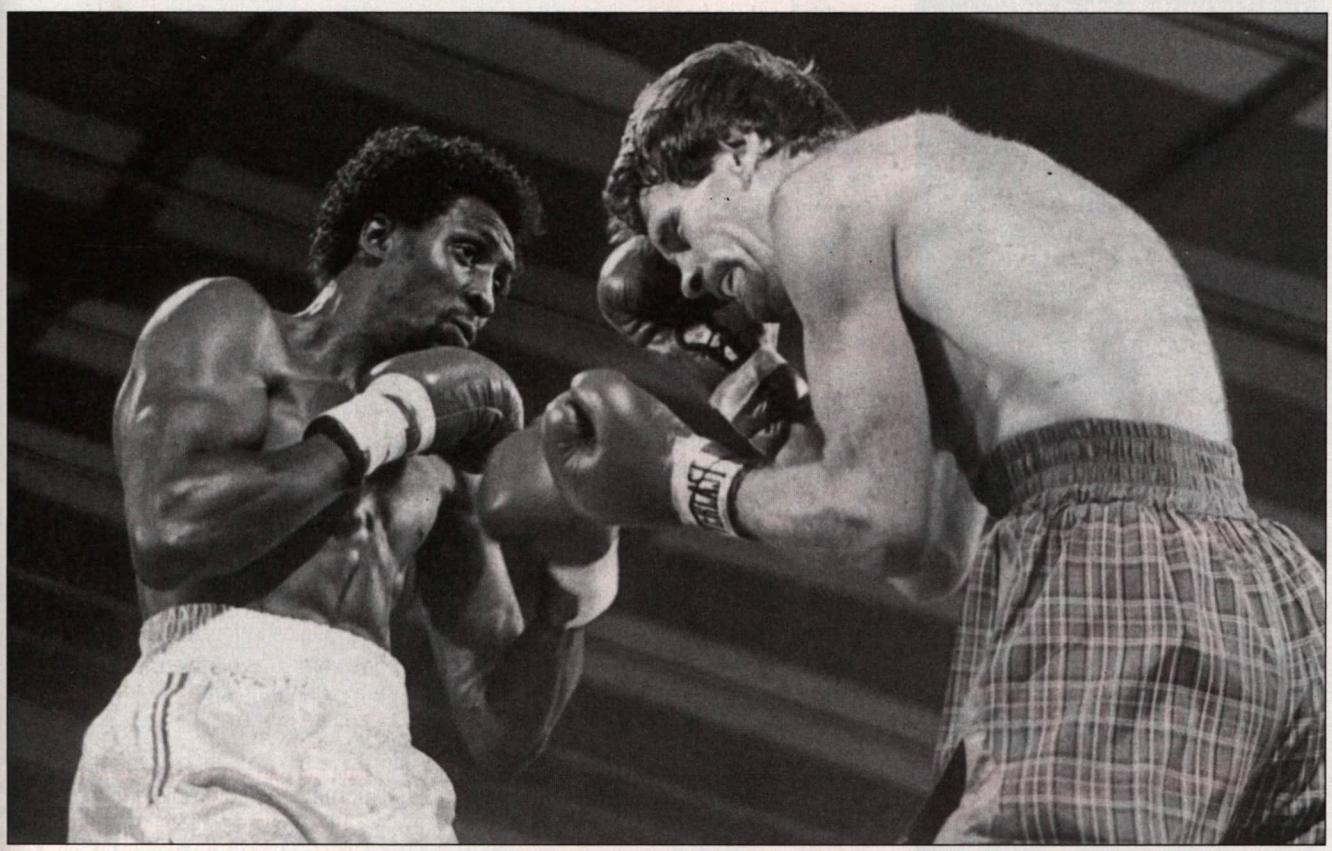
Before he could face Duran, Hearns had to deal with a more complex and ultimately more damaging battle that would rumble on for many years. In May, the *Detroit News* headlined, "Michigan Claims Hearns' Unpaid Taxes Are A Knockout." Pete Waldmeir, an investigative journalist, had been digging around in the fighter's finances and claimed that he owed $103,000 in unpaid taxes. His piece said that Hearns' handlers insisted it must be some sort of a "mix-up," but records on file in Wayne County showed that a personal corporation, Thomas Hearns Enterprises Inc., which the boxer headed and controlled, owed the state of Michigan the money in unpaid withholding taxes. Emanuel Steward declared the allegations to be "news to me." He also said, "Thomas doesn't know anything about it either. He pays a ton of money in taxes. In fact, every time we turn around, it seems, he's giving the government taxes."

Soon afterward, another article by Waldmeir alleged that Hearns owed the Friends of the Detroit Library $36,000 after he had pledged $2 from every ticket sold for his fight against Minchillo to the fund, which was intended to keep the Detroit Public Library open. This time Waldmeir went for the jugular, under the headline "Hit Man Hearns Is Far From A Hit As A Human Being." He called Hearns "a deadbeat" and drew unflattering parallels between the fighter's millionaire lifestyle and the poverty of much of Detroit, asking why the fighter couldn't "come up with a few bucks to keep a promise to a bunch of needy kids." Hearns blamed the fight promoters and claimed, "They told me to stand up and make that promise, but I never intended to give [the money] for every ticket sold."

Partly in response to the bad publicity, Thomas Hearns granted Tommy George, a journalist from the *Free Press Sports*, exclusive access to his world during the build-up to his fight with Roberto Duran. Hearns was generous in his hospitality and open with his views on boxing and beyond. He opened the doors to his extravagant Southfield home, a secluded oasis hidden by towering trees and a six-foot-high fence, where he proudly parked his gold Mercedes alongside his silver Rolls Royce. Inside, standing next to a golden suit of armor, were several tributes to Elvis Presley, including a huge photograph of the "King" and an ornate, black baby-grand piano. There were few reminders, however, of the sport that had afforded him such luxury. Hearns casually explained that he had grown tired of seeing his boxing belts, trophies, and other items of memorabilia, so he either gave them to friends or to his mother.

Hearns viewed life with an endearing simplicity. He enjoyed nothing better than spending time with his friends from his younger days. They would play for hours on the various computer and arcade games that Hearns had acquired over the years, and he admitted that his warrior's instinct was sometimes evident during these competitions because he "absolutely hated to lose at anything."

He also spoke about his ambitions outside the ring. As a teenager, he had wanted to become a policeman. He



In his only bout in 1983, Hearns took on Murray Sutherland in Atlantic City in his fifth fight since losing to Ray Leonard. Although the "Hit Man" won a unanimous 10-round decision, the fact that he didn't knock out the journeyman disappointed many fans.

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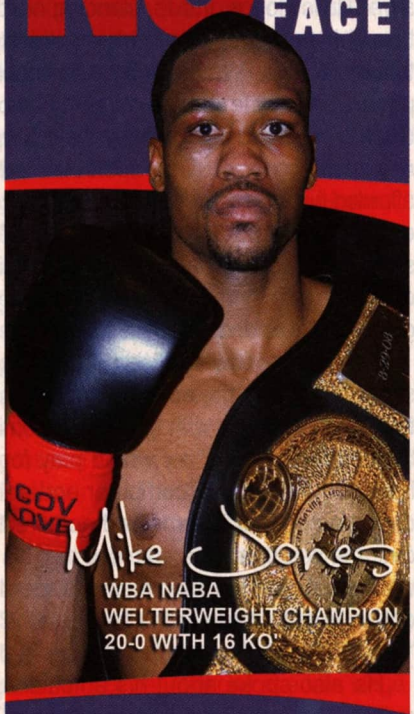

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had enlisted for 15-weeks training at the Detroit Metro Police Academy and became one of the city's 1,500 police reserves. He eagerly volunteered his time at least three times a week, which involved riding in a scout car, carrying a gun, and making arrests along with his regular partner, Terry Hodge, who had been a Detroit policeman for over 11 years. Hearns explained that he did it simply because "it was something I like doing. I couldn't just sit around and box all the time. I'd get bored."

His police partner, Hodge, said, "He's not at all fearful. In fact, he has a great deal of common sense. When we encounter a situation, he's very quick to perceive what is happening and to act. When we hear about a fight on the radio, he wants to be first on the scene. His influence shows, especially with kids, because when Tommy shows up in uniform, the fight is over. They're more interested in knowing about him and playfully sparring with him." He recounted, "I've seen the guy get up from a meal and go out and stop a couple of kids scuffling on the streets. The kids' eyes magnify 10 times their size. A lot of regular police officers wouldn't get up from a meal and go and do that. He's not like a world champion on the job. He's a partner."

Hearns was especially candid about his relationship with his family. His blood father, Thomas Jackson, had died a few months before in Jackson, Tennessee. Hearns had attended the funeral and expressed regret at never having had a relationship with him. "It was sad that I never met him, but I actually felt more sadness for my half-brothers and sisters who were there." He was effusive in his praise for his mother and all she went through with her nine children. "I've tried to show her that I care for her, but you can only do so much with money. I've stopped trying to buy her things and just show her with my heart. That means a lot more than trying to go out and buy her the world."

He also used the interview to address rumors about alleged cocaine abuse and his supposed involvement in a fight at Southfield's Blend Disco, where a man was fatally shot. Hearns had been at the disco during the killing and the rumor mill had gone into overdrive. Tommy George put the allegations to him, including one that he had found the gun in a trash bin and another that he had chased the gunman and held him until police arrived. Hearns denied all these rumors. "I've always considered my health and I don't drink or even like to be around people that smoke. There was never any interest in that or cocaine or any other substance for me. People always try and say bad things about me. I have lots of friends from childhood who were involved in lots of things, but that doesn't make me guilty by association. I don't judge what anybody does. The other stuff about the gun is all untrue. I've heard it all and I have learned to take no notice. People will talk no matter what I do."

When he discussed his relationships with the Kronk gym, Hearns was effusive in his praise for two particular individuals. He thanked Prentiss Byrd and Emanuel Steward for helping him cope with the status his boxing success had bestowed on him. Byrd was an adviser, a public relations man, and a big brother. "He's more than a PR man to me," said Hearns, "he's more like my buddy. I depend on him." When he spoke about his relationship with Steward, his voice dropped to a soft whisper, "He's like a daddy. I have a great deal of love for Emanuel. He was there for me when no one else was. Emanuel is the one who made my career happen. Without him, I would not be the fighter I am today even with all the determination I have."

However, when asked about reports that he had earned $12-14-million through boxing, or about the management deal he enjoyed with Steward, Hearns refused to comment. He regarded their financial relationship as confidential. He did concede that he had carefully invested his earnings through a business called Thomas Hearns Enterprises Inc. Finally, he spoke about his career vision. "I want to show every man on earth that I can win four world titles in four different weight divisions. No other man or woman, no human being has ever done that."

Writer Ralph Wiley also visited Hearns before the Duran fight. He found a complex, sometimes contradictory character, restless to prove himself. "Fighting was Hearns' single abiding interest," wrote Wiley, in his boxing memoir *Serenity*. "He

This is how Hearns looked around the time of his match with Luigi Minchillo, a fight that drew approximately 18,500 to the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Hearns successfully defended the WBC 154-pound title with a unanimous 12-round decision.

bought a Young Chang grand piano and didn't learn to play a note. He ordered the construction of an ornate bar in his home, but didn't drink. He built a glove-shaped pool, but didn't swim. He talked of becoming a businessman, while talk of business easily bored him. He said he wanted to be an actor, yet his expression never changed. A confirmed bachelor, he drove a gold 500 series Mercedes Benz. But he was not a carouser. He'd rather spar with you than speak to you."

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Roberto Duran was a genuine living legend. So when the Detroit Hit Man signed to box "Hands Of Stone" for the World Boxing Council junior middleweight championship, boxing fans smiled in anticipation of a classic encounter. It was a fight everyone wanted to see. Bizarrely, it was initially destined for the unusual location of a beach in the Bahamas, but was relocated to Nevada because of logistical problems and lack of support for such an inaccessible venue. The event was promoted by a consortium of three men with little experience at the highest level of boxing promotion. One of them, Sheldon Saltman, had been involved with the Ali-Frazier fights of the 1970s. The other two were Bill Kozerski, a close ally of Emanuel Steward, at Gold Circle Productions and Walter Alvarez, who was based in Miami. The promotional establishment of Bob Arum and Don King were quick to scorn their efforts and the bout was dogged by fears over money. Steward later claimed that he was only persuaded not to pack their bags and take Hearns home by a personal guarantee from the president of Caesars Palace.

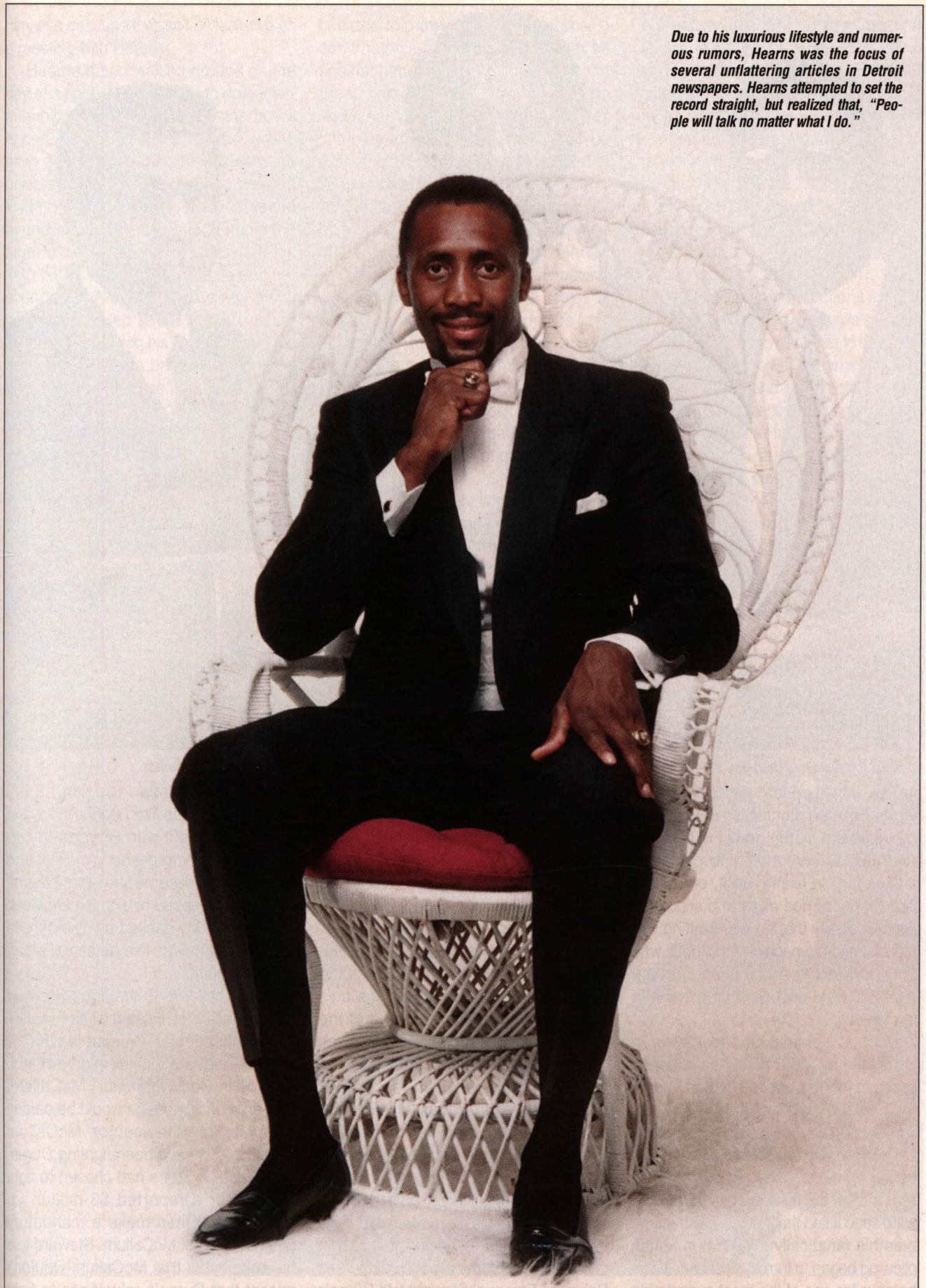
Hearns stayed in training after the Minchillo fight. He was excited to be facing Duran, who was a figure he had admired from afar for a number of years. The 33-year-old Panamanian legend had a well-earned reputation as a teak-tough warrior with a solid punch and vastly underrated defensive skills. In his 81-fight career, he had beaten the very best, including Leonard. He boasted a record of 76 wins, 57 by the short route, with only five defeats.

In the months leading up to June, the Kronk was a hive of activity. The 1984 Olympic Games were to be held in Los Angeles, and Steward had been asked to help coach the boxing team. Many of the Olympians trained there for several months, including Frank Tate and Steve McCrory, who were both already Kronk members, while team star Mark Breland was earmarked to join Kronk. They were pitched in alongside top professionals such as Mike McCallum, Milton McCrory, and Hilmer Kenty, and all sparred with Hearns, helping to sharpen him up. Hearns boasted that it was the best preparation for a fight he had ever enjoyed and predicted that he would finish Duran within the first two rounds.

Arriving in Las Vegas to conclude his preparations, Hearns had to contend with an unexpected volley of taunts and insults from fight followers. Initially, he couldn't understand the hostility, as he had always been popular with the Vegas crowd. He had not accounted for Duran's massive appeal, or for a horde of Duran supporters from Panama who had pitched up in Nevada to support their idol. Part of his popularity laid in his devil-may-care approach. For instance, he invited Hearns and his Kronk teammates to watch him training. His reasoning was that Hearns could see everything he did because he intended to beat him regardless of anything Hearns had to offer.

Roberto Duran was born in utter poverty in a Panama slum, the product of a liaison between a U.S. serviceman and a local girl. He fought for pennies on street corners and trailed his brother down to the nearest boxing gym when he was only eight years old. He was a natural fighter, with boundless energy, aggression, and power. His big break came when he was spotted by Carlos Eleta, a millionaire businessman with an interest in sports. Eleta took over the young urchin's management, and soon he was cutting a swathe though the lightweight division. He captured the world title in 1972 and defended it a dozen times before moving up in weight to challenge the unbeaten welterweight champion, Ray Leonard. In one of the great fights of the era, Duran sensationally outpointed Leonard over 15 bruising rounds. He was generally acknowledged as the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world.

Yet glory was followed by disgrace. In a rematch five months later, Duran



Due to his luxurious lifestyle and numerous rumors, Hearns was the focus of several unflattering articles in Detroit newspapers. Hearns attempted to set the record straight, but realized that, "People will talk no matter what I do."

Publicist Prentiss Byrd (left) and Steward (right) posed with the "Hit Man" and the WBC belt he won by defeating Wilfred Benitez.

stalked while Leonard danced. Neither fighter inflicted significant damage on the other, but Duran grew increasingly frustrated at his inability to catch his elusive foe. In round eight, out of the blue, Duran turned away and shook his glove to signify that he was quitting. He later claimed stomach cramps, but it was an unconvincing explanation, and the "No Mas" fight secured him a place in ring infamy.

Duran's weight ballooned between fights, and in 1982, he suffered further losses to Wilfred Benitez [in Las Vegas] and England's Kirkland Laing in Detroit. Carlos Eleta was so disgusted with him that he vowed to annul their contract, and regular promoter Don King also washed his hands of the fighter, while the boxing world speculated that he was finished and even his fanatically loyal Panamanian following began to turn against him. It was the spur for one of the most remarkable comebacks in ring history. Duran punched out former welterweight king Pipino Cuevas, butchered light middleweight champion Davey Moore, and then gave the mighty Marvin Hagler all he could handle in losing a close decision for the middleweight title in November 1983.

Even as he turned 33 years old, Duran was still a daunting prospect, but to take on an opponent of the Hit Man's stature after seven months out of the ring and without a tune-up fight was rash. And for his part, Hearns felt he had Duran's number. Even years earlier he had referred to him as "little Duran." It was not that he did not respect the Panamanian, simply that he felt his style was made for him. During one meeting he had playfully pulled Duran's hat down over his eyes. This normally would have provoked a mini-explosion, but Duran did nothing. "Tommy always intimidated Roberto," Emanuel Steward told Duran's biographer, Christian Giudice. "Even when Tommy was like 20 years old and he was at a fight with Roberto in Las Vegas. I'll never forget because Roberto was talking to someone and Tommy went up and tapped him on the shoulder. Roberto quickly backed away when he saw Tommy. It was like he saw a ghost or an evil spirit."

In the build-up to the fight, Steward was distracted by dissent within his usually stable set-up. The source was his number-one rated junior middleweight, Mike "The Body Snatcher" McCallum, who announced that he would be parting company from his mentor. McCallum should in fact have been fighting Duran, but Hands Of Stone had chosen to fight Hearns for a reported $3-million instead, rather than make a mandatory defense against McCallum. Steward told his colleagues that McCallum wouldn't accept that Duran's reluctance to fight

him was because it wasn't as lucrative as a meeting with Hearns.

Hearns hated waiting around on the day of a fight. Time seemed to drag interminably. He couldn't wait for the hours to pass so he could strip into his fighting garb and get on with the business he understood best. The waiting time on Friday, June 15, 1984, was increased by the need to wake early to make the eight o'clock weigh-in. Hearns left his 14th floor Caesars Palace suite and descended to the hotel's pavilion, which had also doubled as his training venue. Hearns had divided his time between the hotel's suite and a private room at the Imperial Palace Hotel, where Steward had secreted him away in the days before the fight to avoid the endless distraction of well-wishers dropping in.

When Hearns arrived inside Caesars for the weigh-in, he had to fight his way through hundreds of fans who had converged around the cordoned-off set of scales before being met by a sneering Duran, who began his standard routine of attempting to intimidate his opponent. Hearns refused to rise to the bait and told the eager press corps, "I don't hate Duran. I have nothing at all against him. In fact, I think that he's a great man. Tonight, I have a job to do and it has got to be done." Duran was summoned first to the scales and he slipped off his tracksuit and weighed in at 154 pounds, hitting the junior middleweight limit. Before he stepped away, he looked over at the Kronk team and made an obscene gesture to Hearns, who appeared nonplussed as he quickly stripped and stepped onto the scales to show he was half a pound under the limit. Rather than imitate Duran, who buzzed around the podium, he raised both his hands skyward to indicate that he was the champion. "I will knock Duran out in the second round tonight," he told the television reporters. "I'm going to be the Hit Man once again."

It was still daylight when he returned to Caesars, the same venue where he had faced Leonard, for the fight. The temperature in the ring was recorded at 95 degrees when Hearns made his walk to the ring. "Twisting his arms and then shaking them out to the ends of his fists, he breathed intensity," wrote Christian Giudice in *Hands Of Stone*. "Reaching the ring, he disrobed to show a wiry but sculpted body. Hearns had been sparring in the Kronk Gym with some of the quickest and most talented boxers in the world. He bounced around the ring and shot blur-fast jabs. The Hit Man had never looked in better shape." In the opposite corner, the dark, brooding Duran looked flabby and unusually pensive by comparison.

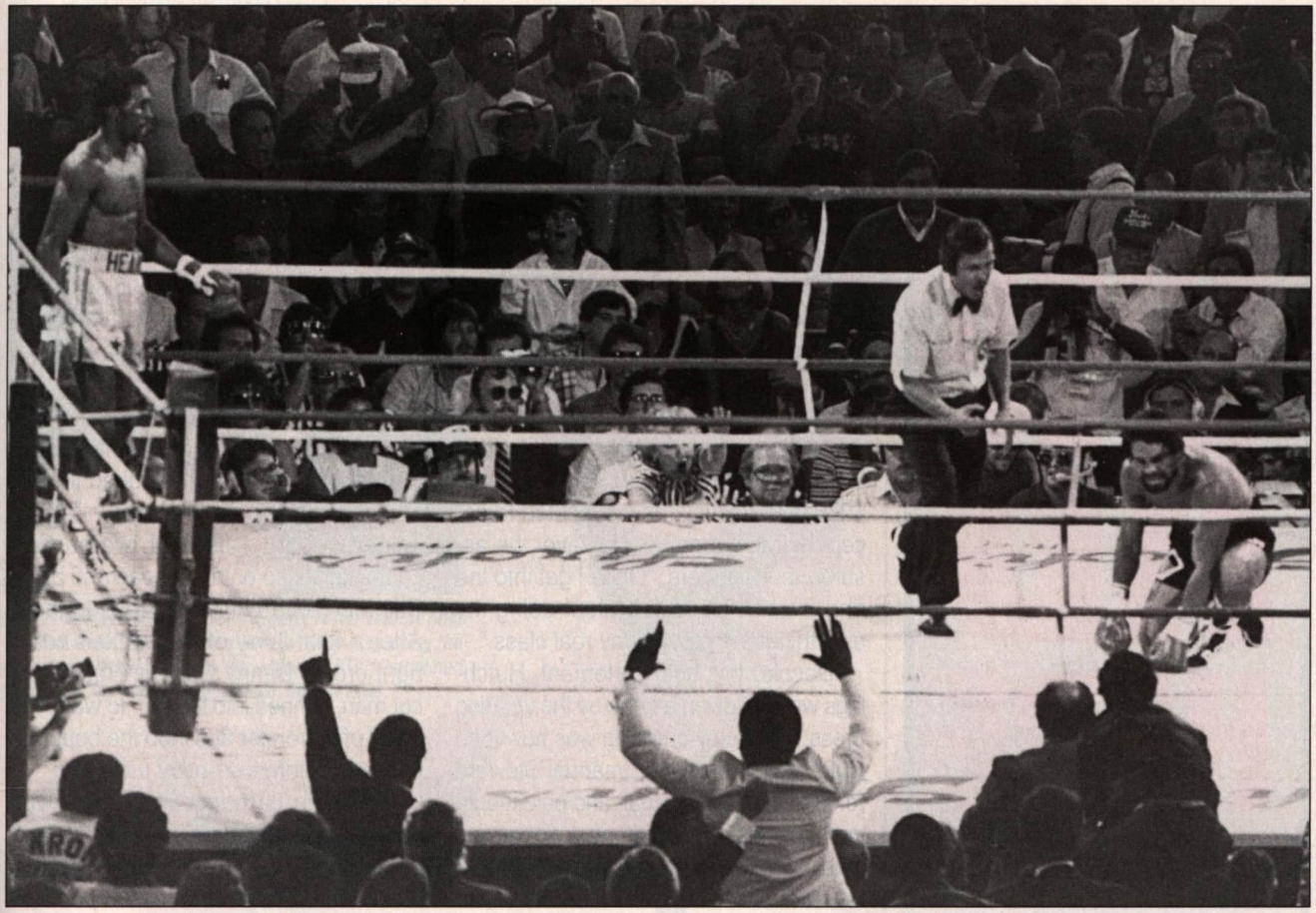
After the usual introductions and instructions were issued by Manila's Carlos Padilla, both fighters retreated to their corners to wait for the bell. Hearns was first out of the blocks and immediately landed his left jab. The opening seconds followed his fight blueprint as he employed a range of head and shoulder feints amidst a blur of jabs and right crosses, which negated the bullish force of Duran and pushed him backward. Despite this, the man they called "El Cholo" grinned at Hearns before beckoning him to fight toe-to-toe.

In contrast to his performance against Wilfred Benitez, Hearns obliged and sent in a devastating right cross, which left

Hearns and Roberto Duran kick off the publicity campaign for their fight at a New York City press conference.

his shoulder like a rocket and put Duran to his knees for only the second time in his career. An earlier jab had opened a cut above Duran's left eye and the blood trickled down his face as he took a count of nine. When referee Padilla signaled the fight's resumption, Hearns sprung from his corner and drove Duran back into the ropes where he unleashed a left hook that sent Duran back to his knees again. Duran's Latin pride forced him back to his feet at the count of two, but Padilla insisted on issuing a standing eight while Duran looked over his shoulder, smirking defiantly and waving at Hearns to continue his blazing attack. Before the Detroit fighter could accommodate this request, the bell sounded to conclude the

Prepping for Duran: There were so many outstanding fighters training at the Kronk Gym at the time, Hearns had plenty of world-class sparring partners, such as Mark Breland. Hearns claimed that it was the best preparation for a fight he had ever enjoyed.



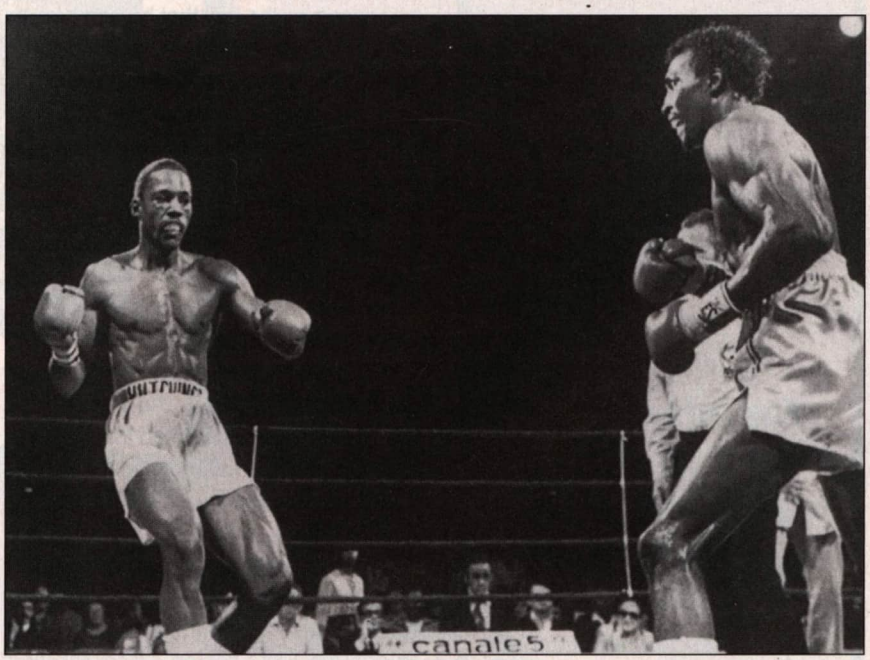
Short and sweet: Just as he had predicted, Hearns kayoed Duran in the second round of their junior middleweight unification bout at Ceasars Palace in Las Vegas. It was arguably the most sensational victory of the Hit Man's Hall of Fame career.

hostilities, and Duran's true condition was betrayed when he walked to the wrong corner and had to be led by a cornerman to his own stool.

It took just 67 seconds of the second round for the annihilation to come to an abrupt end. Hearns sensed that he had to press home his advantage, reinforced by Emanuel Steward's instructions to terminate the challenge of the Panamanian firebrand. After some preliminary fencing, he unleashed a thundering right cross directly onto Duran's bearded jaw that spun his head sideways. Duran's knees buckled and he pitched face down, out before he hit the canvas. Carlos Padilla didn't bother to count but waved the fight over as Duran's anxious seconds rushed into the ring.

No one had ever done that to Roberto Duran. Thomas Hearns was now in demand. The inactivity that drove him to distraction after his loss to Leonard would be a thing of the past.

Just three months after his sensational victory, he was back between the ropes to fight 25-year-old Californian Fred Hutchings, at the Civic Center in Saginaw, Michigan. The rangy Hutchings had an impressive record of 27 victories, 17 inside the distance, against just one loss and had been elevated to third in the junior middleweight ratings. Despite this pedigree, he gave the impression of a callow novice meeting an experienced



Hearns followed his quick blitz of Duran by stopping Fred Hutchings in the third-round of a fight held on September 15, 1984, in Saginaw, Michigan. Hutchings wasn't a marquee challenger, but Hearns wanted to stay busy and Hutchings represented a low-risk payday.

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master. At the press conference called to announce the fight, Hutchings constantly referred to his opponent as "Mr. Hearns" and described him in awed tones as "class." He spoke with wide-eyed wonder about Hearns' earning power and said he still worked in a gas station, pumping gas six days a week in order to support his wife and infant son, which explained his rather odd ring nickname, "The Pumper." The job did not pay too well. "Right now, I'm broke," he confessed. He expressed his frustration that when he had initially signed to fight the champion in January, he was offered $275,000, yet was now expected to accept half that amount. However, he assured the reporters, "Once I get into the ring, I won't be afraid about doing my own thing and proving my real class."

Despite this bold statement, Hutchings was not given a hope by the sporting press. Their only question was how long Hutchings would last. Emanuel Steward refused to rise to the bait and paid tribute to Hutchings' reputation as a clever and elusive boxer. Hearns followed suit and refused to make a prediction about the length of the fight. Instead, he vowed to maintain his career-long strategy of seeking a quick end by applying non-stop pressure in the opening two rounds and then seeing what was required. He claimed his respect for Hutchings was evidenced by the fact that he had broken with his own long-standing tradition and had actually watched recordings of several fights involving his foe.

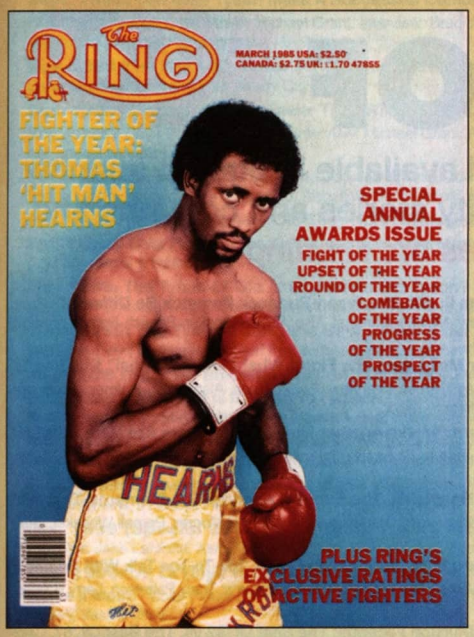
Hearns stepped into the ring bang on the division limit of 154 pounds, a quarter-pound heavier than Hutchings. The more significant tale-of-the-tape statistic was that Hearns' 78" reach was six inches longer than the Californian's, and this advantage was leveraged from the opening bell as he stalked his opponent and flashed his left jab like a cobra's forked tongue. Just about everything he threw connected as Hutchings looked like a rabbit trapped in headlights. A straightforward right toppled Hutchings to the floor for the first knockdown and a left-right combination dropped him again just before the bell to end the first session. "After the first round, I knew that he would not go the full distance," Hearns later said. "I could feel that my punches were hurting him and so it was only a matter of time and patience before the end came."

During the second round, Hearns stayed relaxed. His rapid-fire jab was working to perfection and he set up The Pumper to receive his fearsome right cross with punishing frequency. The sparse crowd of around 2,500 scattered around the 7,000-capacity center saw Hearns look imploringly at the referee, Arthur Mercante, to step in and stop the bout, but to no avail. So Steward urged Hearns to resolve the matter himself. At the start of the third, he looked like he meant business and battered his challenger with a fusillade of two-handed combinations to both the head and body. Still Mercante watched the slaughter. After a final flurry of left jab, left hook, right cross, Benny Casing, Hutchings' cut man, jumped into the ring to wave the towel of surrender and stop the bout four seconds before the end of the round.

After the carnage, Hutchings was swift to pay tribute to *Mr.* Hearns and confessed, "I've never been hurt like that before." He proved a better postfight analyst than a competitor, admitting "My performance was terrible," before thanking referee Mercante for allowing the fight to be stopped. Hearns merely noted that his punches were not as powerful as the ones he threw to flatten Duran. "My whole body was into those punches," he said. He used the platform to demand the opportunity to take on Marvin Hagler, but requested the chance to defend his title again in November before tackling the Brockton fighter.

Hearns was now at his peak. Having been through the fire of some torrid contests, his early brilliance had been reinforced by experience. He was stronger at the heavier weight, tactically wiser, and punched harder than ever. Not even his tangled personal life—he had a one-year-old daughter by one woman and faced a "palimony" suit over the upkeep of a five-year-old son, Ronald, born to a former high school friend, Felicia Dodson—could change the fact that the world laid at his feet. ■

Extracted from* Hit Man: The Thomas Hearns Story *by Brian & Damian Hughes, price $17.95 (Milo Books).



Hearns was selected as 1984's Fighter of the Year by both THE RING and KO and is seen here proudly displaying the plaque presented to him by the editors of KO. Hearns had also been THE RING's Fighter of the Year in 1980.

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(Retains World/IBF Titles)
Alexander Povetkin KO 5 Javier Mora
Samuel Peter KO 2 Nagy Aguilera
Chauncy Welliver W 10 Mike Sheppard
Derric Rossy W 12 Zack Page
Tony Grano W 10 Mark Brown
Sebastian Ceballos D 10 Emilio Zarate
Johnathon Banks KO 6 Travis Walker
Yaroslav Zavorotny KO 6 Maxim Maslov
Osborne Machimana KO 8 Bully Muravha
Odlanier Solis KO 4 Carl Drumond
Alexander Ustinov KO 3 Ed Mahone
Michael Sprott KO 1 Werner Kreiskott
Brent Urban KO 1 Emad Ali
Tyson Fury KO 1 Hans-Joerg Blasko
Travis Kauffman W 6 Mike Miller

Cruiserweights

Marco Huck KO 3 Adam Richards
Yoan Hernandez W 12 Cesar Crenz
Enzo Maccarinelli KO 1 Zoltan Czekus
Nicholas Iannuzzi W 10 Victor Barragan
Wojciech Bartnik W 10 Rene Huebner
Wayne Braithwaite KO 1 Adam Harris

Light Heavyweights

Richard Hall KO 1 Jaffa Ballogou
Alejandro Lakatos W 12 Abdelkahim Derghal
Vikapita Meroro KO 11 Douglas Otieno
Michael Banbula W 10 Carl Wild
Luis Rodriguez W 10 Nuno Lagarto
Thierry Karl W 10 Karim Bennama
Shane McConville W 10 Daniel Lovett

Super Middleweights

Jean Paul Mendy KO 9 Josival Teixeira
Antwun Echols KO 6 Fred Thomas
Marco Rubio KO 2 Jaison Palomeque
Thomas Oosthuizen W 12 Thomas Awinbono
Paul Smith W 12 Tony Dodson
Sebastien Demers W 10 William Joppy
Jessie Nicklow W 10 Scott Sigmon
Rogelio Medina W 10 Demetrius Davis
Isaac Rodrigues W 10 Brian Vera
Javier Maciel KO 7 Ricardo Genero

Middleweights

Sam Soliman KO 11 Shannon McMahon
John Duddy W 10 Michael Medina
Adam Trupish W 10 Michael Walchuk
Bronco McKart W 10 Jose Berrio
Hassan N'Dam N'Jikam KO 10 Mike Ermis
Giovanni Lorenzo KO 3 Wilmer Gonzalez
Gennady Martirosyan KO 10 Aziz Daari

Junior Middleweights

Sechew Powell W 12 Deandre Latimore
Chase Shields W 12 Jimmy Lange
King Davidson W 12 Zulfikar Joy Ali
James Stevenson W 10 George Rivera
Gabriel Rosado W 10 Saul Roman
Cedric Vitu W 10 Nicolas Guisset
Ryan Waters KO 8 Elvin Marbun

Welterweights

Manny Pacquiao W 12 Joshua Clottey
Rafal Jackiewicz W 8 Turgay Uzun
Randall Bailey KO 1 Jackson Bonsu
Alfonso Gomez KO 5 Jose Luis Castillo
Paul Spadafora KO 8 Ivan Fiorletta
Victor Ortiz KO 10 Hector Alatorre
Mike Jones W 10 Henry Bruseles

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK PROMOTIONS

Junior featherweight Robert Marroquin makes fast work of Samuel Sanchez

Ramon Alvarez W 10 Angel Escamilla
Ilunga Dominique W 10 Tumbu Berros
Humberto Chavez W Disq. 9 Juventino Barrera
Shamone Alvarez KO 7 Alexis Camacho
Kell Brook KO 6 Krzysztof Bienias
Muhammad Abdullaev KO 6 Mamasoli Kimsanbaev
Michael Stewart KO 5 Brandon Baue
Julio Sanchez Leon KO 4 Alejandro Ramirez
Saul Alvarez KO 3 Brian Camechis
Sadam Ali KO 1 Jose Duran

Junior Welterweights

Devon Alexander KO 8 Juan Urango
(Retains WBC/Wins IBF Title)
Kaizer Mabuza KO 6 Kendall Holt
Anthony Peterson KO 3 Juan Cruz
Ricardo Dominguez KO 4 Leonardo Resendiz
Danny Garcia W 10 Ashley Theophane
Christopher Sebire W 10 Abdoulaye Soukouna
Claudio Olmedo KO 10 Nazareno Ruiz
Curtis Woodhouse KO 3 Jay Morris
Kenny Galarza KO 3 Miguel Casillas
Jorge Pimentel KO 2 Gonzalo Juzaino
John Molina KO 1 Ricardo Medina

Lightweights

Humberto Soto W 12 David Diaz
(Wins Vacant WBC Title)
Edner Cherry KO 2 Delvin Placencia
Lenny Zappavigna W 12 Fernando Angulo
Matt Zegan W 12 Pierre Francois Bonicel
Ali Chusseinov KO 11 Mohesen Moradian
Daniel Estrada KO 10 Angel Rivero
Reyes Sanchez KO 7 Mario Sanchez
Arturo Uruzquieta W Disq. 6 Daniel Hernandez
Ricardo Dominguez KO 4 Leonardo Resendiz
Fernando Angulo KO 3 Ever Hernandez
Jason Bedeman KO 2 Bilal Mohammad
Rola El Halabi KO 5 Mia St. John

Junior Lightweights

Martin Honorio W 12 Wilton Hilario
Gary Sykes W 12 Andy Morris
Domingo Damigella W 12 Fabiano Da Costa
Jesus Singwancha W 10 Jovy Merca
Karim Chakim W 10 Gildas Gracia
Didier Basulto W 10 Armando Guzman
Gottlieb Ndokosho W 10 Abraham Ndauendapo
Daniel Ruiz KO 9 Baudel Cardenas
Salvador Sanchez KO 6 Jaime Villa
Vicente Rodriguez KO 4 Bruno Godoy
Johnny Tapia KO 4 Jorge Reyes
Gamaliel Diaz KO 2 Eden Marquez
Ronald Pontillas KO 2 Ronnel Esparas
Rene Gonzalez KO 2 Freddy Oporta
Carlos Cardenas KO 1 Rafael Guzman

Featherweights

Antonio Escalante W 10 Miguel Roman
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 2 Antonio Davis
Martin Lindsay W 12 Jamie Arthur
Naoki Matsuda W 12 Vinvin Rufino
Gilberto Sanchez Leon W 10 Gilberto Bolanos
Luis Cruz KO 10 Leon Bobo
Masafumi Kawano Tech. Draw 9 Hikaru Murazawa
Fernando Beltran KO 9 Rafael Urias

Junior Featherweights

Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. KO 4 Marvin Sonsona
Paul Hyland W 12 David Chianella
Jonathan Oquendo W 12 Jose Beranza
Lorenzo Parra W 10 Oscar Chacin
Jeremy Parodi W 10 Osman Aktas
Jason Singwancha W 10 Gedion Amba
Kohei Oba W 10 Eric Barcelona
Samariddin Holbaev KO 8 Viktor Lunkin
Eden Sonsona KO 8 Mauricio Pastrana
Sonny Gonzales KO 4 Jong-Won Jung
Rico Ramos KO 4 Cecilio Santos
Robert Marroquin KO 2 Samuel Sanchez

Bantamweights

Tshifhiwa Munyai W 12 Daniel Ferreras
Luis Valdez KO 12 Victoriano Nunez
Jamie McDonnell KO 10 Jerome Arnould
Rodrigo Bracco KO 10 Pio Antonio Nettuno
Thangthong Kiattaweesuk KO 4 Jaypee Alipio
Eduardo Garcia KO 2 Enrique Luna

Junior Bantamweights

Vic Darchinyan W 12 Rodrigo Guerrero
(Retains WBA/WBC Titles)
Richie Mepranum W 10 Hernan Marquez

Flyweights

Omar Narvaez W 10 Santiago Acosta
Wandee Singwancha KO 4 Alwi Alhabsyi
Rayonta Whitfield KO 9 Sergio Espinoza
Myung Ho Lee W 10 Takuya Yamada

Junior Flyweights

Rodel Mayol Tech. Draw 3 Omar Nino
(Retains WBC Title)
Wisanu Pornobnum W 12 Ichal Tobidal
Hekkie Budler W 12 Juanito Rubillar
Breilor Teran W 10 Iwer Henriquez
Oscar Ibarra KO 4 Darwin Zamora

Strawweights

Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum W 6 Ricky Manufoe
Michael Landero W 12 Roel Lagonero
Buarimbung Lookjandaeng KO 3
Petchnammoon Kwanjaisrikort

Humberto Soto W 12 David Diaz

Arlington, Texas: In his second start as a lightweight, Soto claimed the vacant WBC lightweight title with a unanimous decision over Diaz on the Manny Pacquiao-Joshua Clottey card at Cowboys Stadium. Soto showed considerable technical skills, but little fire.

The only reason the WBC trinket was on the line is because Edwin Valero, who defended the alphabet strap with a ninth-round TKO of Antonio DeMarco on February 6, suffered a scalp cut in that fight, prompting the WBC to demote him to "champion in recess." Considering its tawdry history, it should come as no surprise that the avaricious organization is determined to keep the sanctioning fees rolling in, regardless of how flimsy the pretense.

The bout was barely underway when an accidental clash of heads caused referee Laurence Cole (USA) to call for a brief time out for Soto to recover from the cranial collision. When action resumed, Diaz mounted an attack, only to be floored by a counter combination to the head. Diaz, 134, Chicago, Illinois, wasn't seriously hurt, but by time the bell rang to end the first round, he was already trailing by two points.

Soto, 134¾, Los Mochis, Mexico, didn't try to follow up on his early success and was content to outbox the crude swinging Diaz from a safe distance during the second and third rounds. Meanwhile, the massive crowd of 50,994, bored by the lack of action, amused itself by doing the wave.

The 33-year-old Diaz continued to press forward, looking to turn the boxing match into a brawl, but Soto, aptly named "La Zorrita" (The Little Fox), was too crafty for him and continued to thwart Diaz' attempts to mix it up. Diaz did moderately better in the second half of the bout, roughing up Soto along the ropes, especially in the ninth and 10th rounds. Even so, he never landed anything significant enough to hurt his 29-year-old opponent and turn the fight in his favor.

Still, Diaz had closed the gap somewhat by the start of the 12th round, but any hope of victory was dashed when Soto, 51-7-2 (32), knocked him down again with an accurate flurry of blows to the head. Diaz, 35-3-1 (17), regained his feet and finished the fight, but lost by twin scores of 117-109 by Hubert Minn (USA) and David Sutherland (USA), and 115-111 by Gale Van Hoy (USA).

"I think Diaz being left-handed was a little more difficult than I thought it would be, but I was able to control the fight," said Soto, who is penciled in to fight Anthony Peterson on Top Rank's June card at Yankee Stadium. "I just couldn't hit him as hard as I wanted. He's a real tough guy."

Actually, Soto does not seem to have the same snap on his punches that he did when campaigning at featherweight and junior lightweight. We'll have a better handle on his future at 135 pounds after the bout with Peterson, who is younger, fresher, and a harder puncher than Diaz.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(3-14-10)
Nigel Collins

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Diaz absorbs a straight left from Soto

Alfonso Gomez KO 5 Jose Luis Castillo

Arlington, Texas: In a bout that saw the end of one career and the continued rejuvenation of another, former world lightweight champion Castillo quit on his stool at the end of the fifth round of a scheduled 10-rounder on the Pacquiao-Clottey undercard. Gomez, who came to prominence as a contestant in the first season of *The Contender*, tallied his fourth-straight win since being stopped by Miguel Cotto in April 2008.

It was clear from the start that Gomez' hand and foot speed would be too much for the 36-year-old Castillo to

handle. Moreover, on the few occasions when the ex-champ cornered Gomez, Castillo's formerly murderous left hook no longer packed the power that helped carry him to the top of the lightweight division in 2004.

Gomez, 145, Guadalajara, Mexico, beat Castillo, 144, Mexicali, Mexico, to the punch round after round, gradually increasing his offensive output. By the fifth, Castillo was taking quite a lot of punishment, as his younger opponent piled on the punches. Even so, it came as a bit of a surprise when Castillo's trainer told referee Kenny Bayless (USA) that their man could no longer continue.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Gomez ended Castillo's career

"I apologize to the public," said Castillo, 60-9-1 (52), at the postfight press conference. "I found out tonight that I didn't have it anymore."

It was a sad ending for Castillo, who had beaten such outstanding fighters as Joel Casamayor, Stevie Johnston, Diego Corrales, and Juan Lazcano during a lengthy pro career that began in May 1990. But more than anything else, "El Temible" will be best remembered for coming extremely close to handing Floyd Mayweather his first loss in their April 2002 encounter, a fight that many observers thought Castillo had won despite the verdict in Mayweather's favor.

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Devon Alexander

The phrase "in the right place at the right time" has never really fit Devon Alexander, who grew up amid gang violence and drugs in the rugged Hyde Park section of North St. Louis. Few young men escape those streets. Out of the group of 30 kids trainer Kevin Cunningham brought to his gym back in 1995, Alexander is the only one who didn't wind up dead, in jail, or on the streets.

The junior welterweight neighborhood is much more welcoming these days for "Alexander The Great," who has a chance to conquer one of boxing's hottest divisions. The 23-year-old southpaw took a significant step on March 6 by taking out tough Colombian beltholder Juan Urango in an HBO-televised unification bout. Urango had never been stopped, having gone the distance in losses to Ricky Hatton and Andre Berto. Alexander dropped him twice with uppercuts in the eighth round, leading to a sensational eighth-round stoppage.

That performance makes Alexander a major player in a division that includes several big names. HBO is looking to make a series of matches in hopes of clearing up the 140-pound picture, giving Alexander opportunities at some significant fights. For once, Alexander is "in the right place at the right time."

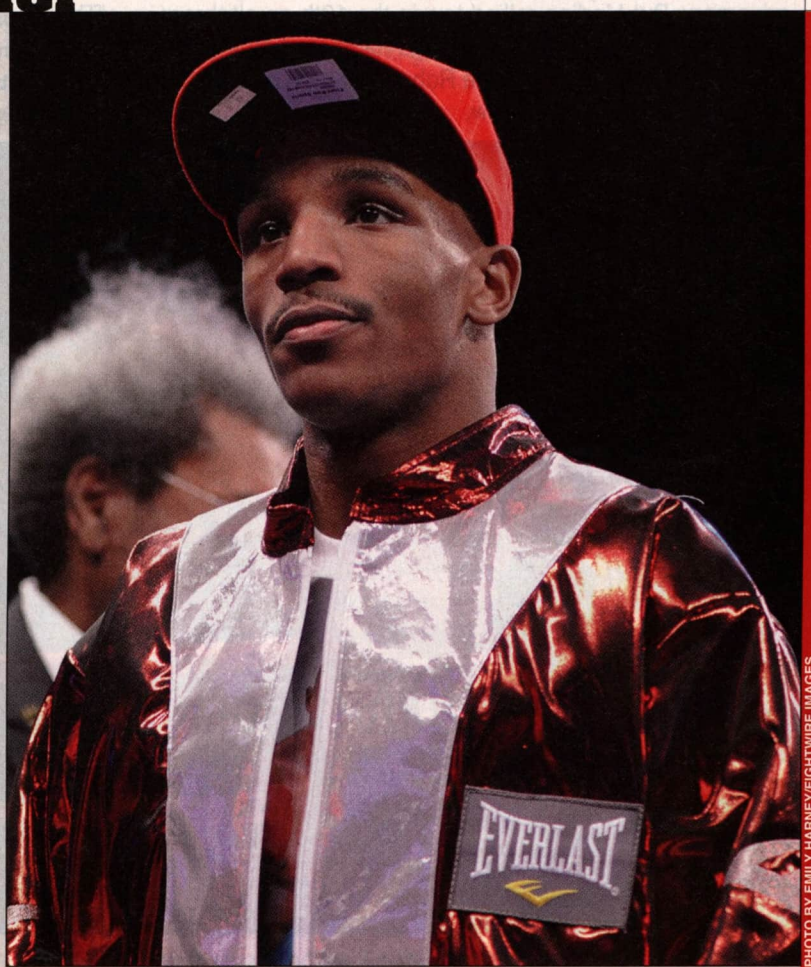


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The 29-year-old Gomez, 22-4-2 (11), is boxing more and slugging less these days, which has helped him rebuild his career to the point where he can look forward to more lucrative paydays in the future.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(3-14-10)
Nigel Collins

John Duddy W 10 Michael Medina

Arlington, Texas: In the most lackluster of the televised portion of the low-budget Pacquiao-Clottey undercard, Duddy managed to squeak past Medina via split decision, earning him a spot on the Miguel Cotto-Yuri Foreman show at Yankee Stadium.

Duddy, 160, Derry, Ireland, got off to a slow start, as the taller Medina boxed intelligently and worked the body diligently to take most of the early rounds on THE RING scorecard. By the third, Medina, 155½, Monterrey, Mexico, was landing clean rights as Duddy shuffled forward, looking to land a bomb.

Crowd-pleasing action was sparse, except for the sixth, when Duddy, 30, connected with a couple of hard punches, and Medina, 23, flurried back effectively.

Duddy bullied Medina around a bit down the stretch, landing enough punches to gain ground on his Mexican adversary. But Medina rallied to win the 10th on all three official cards, though his cause was hampered by a one-point penalty issued by referee Robert Chapa (USA) in the eighth round for punching low.

Judges Mike Mitchell (USA) and Charles Phillips (USA) both scored it for Duddy, 96-93, while Arturo Velasquez (USA) went the other way, giving it to Medina by the same score. THE RING also had Medina winning by a 96-93 margin.

The win raised Duddy's record to 29-1 (18), while Medina slipped to 22-2-2 (18).

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(3-14-10)
Nigel Collins

Vic Darchinyan W 12 Rodrigo Guerrero

Rancho Mirage, California: The unheralded Guerrero had Marco Antonio Barrera as a cornerman and Fernando Montiel as a sparring partner for his challenge of Darchinyan at Agua Caliente Casino. Unfortunately for Guerrero, he had to fight "The Raging Bull" on his own.

The 22-year-old Mexican was simply out of his league against the 34-year-old southpaw Darchinyan, who pitched a near-shutout in making his third defense of both the WBA and WBC junior bantamweight belts. At the same time, though, Guerrero proved to be tougher than a dry, overcooked steak as Darchinyan tenderized him throughout with his best shots, but couldn't sink his teeth in far enough for a knockdown.

"This kid took big punches," said Darchinyan, 115, Sydney, Australia via Armenia. "I respect him. He's a good kid. He took good punches and he went 12 rounds. I hit him with good punches, but still I could not stop him. Good boy."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Duddy en route to split decision over Medina

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Guerrero absorbed a lot of punishment

Guerrero, 114, Mexico City, Mexico, fought for the first time outside of his native country, had just 20 amateur bouts before turning pro in 2005, and had never faced a southpaw. Darchinyan, 34-2-1 (27), started aggressively in hopes of scoring the quick kayo, but Guerrero, 13-2-1 (9), caught him with a right hand 70 seconds into the fight. From that point, Darchinyan showed a bit more caution, at least by his standards.

Darchinyan looked more relaxed in the second round, when he moved in and out of the pocket and jabbed to set up his left-handed bombs. He also attacked the body frequently, even landing a bolo downstairs 45 seconds before the bell. Despite a slight reach advantage, Guerrero struggled to find his range. By the third, he was loading up too much with his jab and missing badly due to Darchinyan's lateral movement.

Darchinyan played to the crowd in the fourth, when Guerrero bled from a cut above his right eye caused by an accidental headbutt. Darchinyan also fell back into the ropes, then caught Guerrero coming forward with a left uppercut, a trick he'd pull off throughout the fight. He was landing at will by the fifth, but Guerrero continued coming forward despite having no power left in his punches. When the ringside doctor examined Guerrero's cut at the start of the sixth and asked the challenger if he wished to continue, Guerrero smiled back at him.

The closest Darchinyan came to a stoppage was the eighth, when he stunned Guerrero early with an overhand left. Referee Ray Corona (USA) looked ready to stop it midway through the round, after Darchinyan suckered Guerrero into a few more left uppercuts off the ropes. Guerrero continued coming forward and throwing punches, however.

Darchinyan slowed the pace in the ninth and attacked in spurts the rest of the way, as if he had realized his opponent wasn't going anywhere. Guerrero sported a cut and two badly swollen eyes at the final bell, while Darchinyan only had a bruised forehead, likely from a headbutt. Max DeLuca (USA) scored it 120-108, C. J. Ross (USA) saw it 118-110, and Marty Denkin (USA) had it 117-111, all for Darchinyan. THE RING agreed with DeLuca's tally. It was the first time in 12 title-fight wins that Darchinyan had been forced to go the distance.

THE RING's top-rated junior bantamweight said he wanted a rematch with Nonito Donaire next. Donaire stopped Darchinyan in 2007, and holds the so-called WBA "interim" belt, which supposedly makes the Filipino a mandatory challenger. Darchinyan promoter Gary Shaw, still miffed that Donaire left him for Top Rank, instead mentioned Montiel, Joseph Agbeko, Israel Vazquez, and Rafael Marquez as future opponents.

"We're not fighting Donaire," Shaw said at the postfight press conference. "[Darchinyan] wants to fight Donaire. As long as I have the promotional rights, we'll never fight Donaire. I don't believe in rewarding disloyal and dishonest fighters and giving them the opportunity to win all these belts."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(3-6-10)

Rodel Mayol Tech. Draw 3 Omar Nino

Guadalajara, Mexico: One of these days, a Mayol fight will end cleanly. It didn't happen at the Coliseo Olimpico, where the Filipino's first defense of the WBC junior flyweight belt led to another fine mess.

Late in the third round, Nino, 108, ripped a one-two that landed south of the border. Mayol, 108, dropped his hands, and referee Vic Drakulich (USA) reached forward and grabbed Nino's right shoulder as he lunged in behind the challenger in an effort to step in. Drakulich also yelled, "Stop," though Nino doesn't speak English. Before Drakulich could fully separate the two, Nino stepped on Mayol's left foot and drilled him with a vicious left hook to the jaw.

Mayol, Mandaue City, Philippines, crumpled into a heap before falling to his back, where he remained for several minutes. Mayol's neck was immobilized. He was then strapped to a board, lifted onto a stretcher, and taken out of the stadium via ambulance while officials attempted to sort out the fiasco. What initially appeared to be a victory for hometown hero Nino, Guadalajara, Mexico, was announced as a technical draw after WBC Vice President Mauricio Sulaiman reviewed the replays at ringside. Upset fans showered the ring with beer.

PHOTO BY JUAN MEJIA/GETTY IMAGES

Medics treat Mayol after late shot from Nino

A week and a half later, after reviewing the decision, the WBC confirmed the decision and ordered an immediate rematch. Mayol, who was quickly released from the hospital, vowed to knock out Nino.

"Rodel Mayol is a comedian and just laid on the mat to keep his title without fighting like a champion should," Nino promoter Hector Garcia told Fightnews.com. "It was all a comedy. Omar was robbed of a legitimate victory."

A technical draw was a reasonable conclusion to a situation with a lot of gray area. Sure, Mayol had failed to protect himself at all times, but he was facing Drakulich as the ref moved forward to separate the two, while Nino had his back to Drakulich. It wasn't a total cheap shot that should have warranted a disqualification, but it wasn't exactly a legal punch that should lead to a kayo, either.

At any rate, Mayol, 26-4-2 (20), continued his run of controversy. His previous four bouts ended early due to headbutts, including his second-round stoppage of Edgar Sosa last November for the WBC belt that left Sosa hospitalized with a fractured cheekbone. Before facing Nino, 28-3-2 (11), THE RING's second-ranked junior flyweight complained about having to defend in his opponent's hometown until the WBC agreed to assign three U.S. judges to the fight.

Not that it mattered. The first round was close, with the 28-year-old Mayol boxing well on the outside, and Nino charging forward and landing some solid shots to the body. The second was all Mayol, starting with a left uppercut that drove Nino, 33, back into the ropes shortly after the round began. With Nino still shaken, Mayol connected again with a left uppercut and a left hook upstairs that wobbled Nino and nearly sent him down. Nino weathered the storm well, despite a small cut over his left eye, and Mayol was back to boxing at a distance by the final minute of the round.

Nino, THE RING's ninth-rated contender best known for his 2006 points win against Brian Viloria, looked crisp again in the early portion of the third round. Then the chaos ensued. In the days that followed, it looked likely that the two sides would agree to a rematch. Manny Pacquiao reportedly expressed interest in promoting it.

Television: **Pay-per-view**
Promoter: **Boxeo de Gala**
(2-27-10)

Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. KO 4 Marvin Sonsona

Bayamon, Puerto Rico: More often than not, when the son of a former champion tries to take up the family business, he falls well short of his father's accomplishments. He's not there yet, but maybe Vazquez Jr. will succeed where Marvis Frazier, Aaron Pryor Jr., Hector Camacho Jr., and scores of others have failed.

The 25-year-old Vazquez Jr., 122, captured his first world-title belt in just his 19th pro bout as he overpowered the smaller southpaw Sonsona, 121¼, at the Rueben Rodriguez Coliseum for the WBO trinket vacated by Juan Manuel Lopez. The win put Vazquez Jr. and Vazquez Sr.

in an exclusive club of father-son beltholders that includes the Pattersons (Floyd and Tracy), the Spinks (Leon and Cory), and the Espadases (Guty Sr. and Guty Jr.).

"We accomplished what a lot of people were not able to accomplish," said Wilfredo Sr., the former three-division champ who was in his son's corner. "And now we've won titles in the same division."

The 19-year-old Sonsona, General Santos City, Philippines, was forced to vacate his WBO junior bantamweight belt last November after failing to make weight for a defense against Alejandro Hernandez. "Marvelous" Marvin tried to imitate his countryman, Manny Pacquiao, by jumping up two classes to take on the heavy-handed Vazquez Jr., Bayamon, Puerto Rico.

It started well for Sonsona, 14-1-1 (12), who used his slight reach and hand speed advantages to keep Vazquez Jr. away during a tedious opening round. Vazquez Jr., 18-0-1 (15), began to overpower Sonsona midway through the second, however, when he drove the southpaw into the ropes with a double right hand upstairs. He then finished the round with two left hooks to the body and a series of right hands that left Sonsona with a small cut under his left eye.

Vazquez Jr. continued to do an excellent job cutting off the ring and punishing Sonsona's body in the third. Sonsona began laying on the ropes more frequently and relying less on his footwork, and it was becoming apparent that he didn't have enough power to keep Vazquez Jr. off him.

Sonsona had his back against the ropes and his hands high midway through the fourth, when Vazquez Jr. sent a right hand between the Filipino's guard after landing a left hook to the body and a left hook to the head. Vazquez Jr. then ripped a left hook into Sonsona's liver. Sonsona actually threw a left uppercut before the delayed aftereffect of the liver shot put him on the deck, where referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) counted him out.

Michael Pernick (USA), Tom Miller (USA), and Carlos Colon (Puerto Rico) each had it 29-28 for Vazquez Jr. at the time of the stoppage, as did THE RING. The impressive performance catapulted Vazquez Jr. into THE RING ratings at number nine.

"[Sonsona] is a great boxer, a young man," said Vazquez Jr., who turned pro with no amateur experience. "I knew he had great desire and would come straight at me. I knew he was in great shape. I knew I was going up against one of the best boxers in the world, so my conditioning was so important."

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Puerto Rico's Best Promotions**
(2-27-10)

Mike Jones W 10 Henry Bruseles

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Jones, 146¾, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, had very little trouble winning a unanimous 10-round decision over Bruseles, 147, Gurabo, Puerto Rico.

After a cautious start, Jones stepped up the pace in the third round and began dominating Bruseles with his jab. As his confidence grew, Jones began to throw combinations. Jones, 20-0 (16), a widely hyped 26 year old, showed

PHOTO BY TOM BRIGLIA/TOP RANK

Jones fires a right at Bruseles

plenty of poise and ring generalship, picking his spots smartly and not allowing Bruseles into the fight. Judge Luis Rivera (USA) saw the bout at 97-92, while Alan Rubenstein (USA) and Walast Roldan (USA) each turned in scores of 98-92, all for Jones. The referee was Earl Brown (USA).

Bruseles, 28-4-1 (15), hadn't tasted defeat in five years—his last loss was a knockout at the hands of Floyd Mayweather Jr.—but he couldn't find the range against the young Philly fighter. Bruseles never stopped trying, but he was continually beaten to the punch and could never mount a meaningful offense.

The show was a sellout at Bally's Park Place Hotel Casino, where Jones had fought twice previously. Top Rank's Bob Arum said in a prefight statement, "We are getting big crowds for all of our *Top Rank Live!* boxing cards since the series got underway on Fox earlier this year. It's a very hot series. Fighters want to be on it and fans want to see it. The key is to make strong, competitive fights, which our matchmakers Bruce Trampler and Brad Goodman are doing."

But for many fans seeing Jones for the first time on television, his performance was not of the star-making variety. Jones was workmanlike, content with getting the win rather than dazzling the customers. But even those who weren't overly impressed could see that Jones possesses athleticism, a good boxing mind, and sound fundamentals.

On failing to stop Bruseles, Jones said, "I'm not disappointed at all. I like going 10 rounds against better competition. He's a veteran." Jones was also matter-of-fact about his careful start. "I was cautious, because I didn't know what he was going to do."

Television: **Fox Sports Net/Fox Sports Espanol**
Promoters: **Peltz Boxing Promotions, Top Rank**
(2-27-10)

Kaizer Mabuza KO 6 Kendall Holt

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Former titlist Holt, 139½, Paterson, New Jersey, had absolutely no answers for Mabuza, 140, Johannesburg, South Africa, at Bally's Park Place Hotel Casino. Even Holt's greatest supporters had to be relieved when referee Lindsey Page (New Jersey) stopped the fight after the sixth round. Page was following the advice of Holt's trainer, Aroz Gist, who had clearly grown tired of watching his fighter being battered by Mabuza.

The 28-year-old Holt, 25-4 (13), was supposed to be making his triumphant return after his disappointing loss to Timothy Bradley in 2009. He'd taken time off to heal nagging shoulder and knuckle injuries and stepped into the ring as a 14-1 favorite against the unheralded South African. But after a solid start, Holt seemed to lose energy and enthusiasm. He laid on the ropes, bled profusely from the nose, and left the Internet bookmakers scratching their heads.

Carl Moretti of Top Rank said at the postfight press gathering: "I thought Kendall won the first round, but after that, it was the fastest downhill [slide] in the ring that I've ever seen. After a while, it was like [Holt] was a heavy bag and he [Mabuza] could hit him whenever he wanted."

Holt's manager and friend, New York Giants running back Brandon Jacobs, told NorthJersey.com, "Mentally, I just think something was wrong. I don't know if his heart's all the way in it, like it was earlier in his career. I don't know what it is."

Mabuza, 23-6-3 (13), used a steady body attack to pin Holt to the ropes and found an easy path to Holt's chin with damaging uppercuts. "I could tell right away that I was too strong for him," Mabuza said. "I could see that he didn't like getting hit to the body and that my uppercuts were hurting him."

The bout was Mabuza's United States debut. He'd previously done most of his fighting in South Africa, Ghana, and Australia, winning some regional titles along the way. Although Mabuza, 30, has had a few rough patches in his career, he's currently enjoying an eight-fight winning streak, including a trip to Ukraine last year to win a majority decision over undefeated local favorite Sergey Fedchenko. His non-televised win over Holt could be considered one of the upsets of the year.

Promoters: **Peltz Boxing Promotions, Top Rank**
(2-27-10)

PHOTO BY TOM BRIGLIA/TOP RANK

Ref Lindsey Page raises Mabuza's arm following upset of Holt

Antonio Escalante W 10 Miguel Roman

El Paso, Texas: By the end of 2010, this ESPN2-televised 10-rounder between a fringe contender and a journeyman is unlikely to have left a lasting enough impression to be recognized as the Fight of the Year. There will assuredly be a premium-cable or pay-per-view mega-fight that bumps it aside. But as of the end of February, at least, after a slow start to 2010 in the boxing world, Escalante's hometown brawl against Roman stood, however temporarily, as the leader in the clubhouse for the year-end award.

Escalante and Roman have an interesting history. Roman grew up just over the Mexican border in Ciudad Juarez, and when they were kids, Escalante once found himself south of the border, embroiled in a street fight with a gang of bullies. Roman was part of that gang.

Roman and Escalante slug it out in thriller

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Escalante, 24, brought his own gang this time, in the form of a rabid crowd at the Don Haskins Center that booed Roman, also 24, lustily. An aggressive action fighter under any circumstances, Escalante, 126, was extra fired up by the crowd noise, and he came out stepping into every shot and turning over his left hook with bad intent. But Roman, 126, wasn't intimidated in the least and chugged forward applying pressure. Every punch from one man drew an immediate response from the other. Escalante edged the round with his quicker hands, but the brawl was definitely on.

Roman struck first in the second, buzzing the local favorite with a left hook that forced him to hold. Escalante made a statement of his own late in the third, landing a flush hook to the chin. The fight's first easy-to-score round came in the fourth, when Escalante, despite backing up, landed all of the noteworthy punches and consistently worked "Mickey" Roman's body.

Twice in the fifth round, Escalante nearly hit the canvas: first because his feet got tangled, and later because of a left hook from Roman. The Mexican kept applying unrelenting pressure, but he found himself falling behind from rounds six through eight because the faster hands of Escalante were getting the majority of the productive work done. This was especially true with about 20 seconds left on the clock in round eight, when Escalante exploded with a sudden burst off the ropes. He put together an 11-punch flurry, about three or four of them landing clean, and the whole whirlwind assault sent Roman staggering backward and finally down. He didn't appear hurt and rose at American referee Rocky Burke's count of eight, only to eat huge shots from Escalante in the final seconds. With the 10-8 round, Escalante seemed to have put the fight out of reach, provided he could stay on his feet the last two rounds.

Escalante came into the ninth thinking the very same thing, moving and potshotting instead of standing and slugging as he had been. But between a smattering of boos from the crowd and a cross-armed goading from Roman, Escalante quickly reversed course and waded back into the fray. The Texan landed a sick left-right-left combination off the ropes, but Roman didn't even blink, showing a tremendous chin. After that, Escalante looked tired, and Roman stole the round with a big finish.

At the start of the 10th, Escalante had regained some energy and opened up with fiery combinations. He landed absurdly wide powershots in combination, one after another, and Roman, 28-7 (20), soaked it up and then countered with a heavy right to the chin. The crowd exploded at the bell in celebration of an excellent action fight, and the fighters immediately embraced, their childhood scuffle long behind them.

Judge Levi Martinez (USA) scored it 97-92, the same as THE RING, while Gerardo Venzor (Mexico) and Raul Valencia (Mexico) both had it 96-93, all for Escalante, who advanced to 23-2 (14) with the hard-fought win.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(2-26-10)

Victor Ortiz KO 10 Hector Alatorre

Los Angeles, California: Ortiz needed some work one fight removed from his knockout loss to Marcos Maidana, and Golden Boy Promotions needed some star power on its "Fight Night Club" card at Club Nokia. Thus, the roughly 1,500 fans who were crammed into the little night club had the chance to see a world-class fighter in action. Alatorre, the junior welterweight's hand-picked, soft-in-the-middle opponent, also did his part: He showed up to take an inevitable beating in the scheduled 10-round bout.

The 23-year-old Ortiz, 143¾, Oxnard, California, didn't look particularly good because the clever journeyman from the farm country in central California was more interested in surviving than actually fighting back. He covered up, he clutched, he ran, he did everything but throw his own punches. His best weapon probably was his head, which he thrust in Ortiz' direction many times. Still, the quick, skillful contender thoroughly outboxed his overmatched opponent from beginning to end and in the process removed a little more of any lingering self doubt after Maidana took him out in six rounds last June.

And he gave the local fans a thrill in the end. When the bell rang to open the 10th round, Ortiz, 26-2-1 (21), had had enough. He jumped on Alatorre, 16-9 (5), in an obvious attempt to finish the job and succeeded in dramatic fashion, landing a left and then a perfect right uppercut that put the 28-year-old Alatorre, 143, Tulare, California, on his pants and hurt him badly. He got to his feet but couldn't go on, prompting California referee David Mendoza to stop it with 2:09 remaining in the fight.

"Coach Danny [Garcia] said to me in the corner [before the 10th], 'Do you want to knock him out?'" Ortiz said. "I said, 'The guy can take a punch.' He said, 'Do you want to knock him out?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Go do it. Just be intelligent.' That's what I did."

Ortiz was pleased, if somewhat self-deprecating, afterward. "I'm satisfied," Ortiz said. "I know I still have a lot of work to do, though. My manager, Shelly Finkel, said, 'Why are you never happy?' I know I have work to do. This isn't my 100-percent best. I know I could've done a little better in every way possible. It's okay, though. It's a learning experience, something to take back to the gym." He had better be at his 100-percent best soon as the victory over Alatorre sets up Ortiz' first meaningful test since Maidana, against veteran Nate Campbell on the Amir Khan-Paulie Malignaggi undercard on May 15 in New York, New York.

Television: **Fox Sports Net**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(2-25-10)
Michael Rosenthal

Giovanni Segura KO 3 Walter Tello

Acapulco, Mexico: If there's one tiny titlist we don't mind seeing in marking-time fights, it's WBA light flyweight beltholder Segura, who can make just about any match interesting. The unknown Panamanian Tello, 23, had lost two of his previous five and had done nothing to warrant a title shot, but Segura, a wide-punching, no-defense knockout artist, made the mismatch fun for fans and occasionally scary for his supporters until ending matters at 1:56 of the third round.

Segura, 108, lives in Bell Gardens, California, but was born in the Mexican state of Guerrero, where this fight took place. The crowd at the Discoteca El Alebrije was firmly in favor of the 27-year-old beltholder, and he gave the fans just what they came to see. From the opening bell, Segura and the game Tello, 108, stood toe-to-toe, both landing at will. The difference was that Segura walked through the Panamanian's punches, whereas Segura's shots did damage.

In the second round, Segura scored with a sizzling uppercut, forcing Tello to hold. The challenger's survival tactics didn't work well, and moments later, a heavy right hand put Tello on the canvas. Referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) mistakenly ruled it a slip, but this wasn't a fight where a point here or there was going to make a difference.

In the third round, Segura got in another wild right

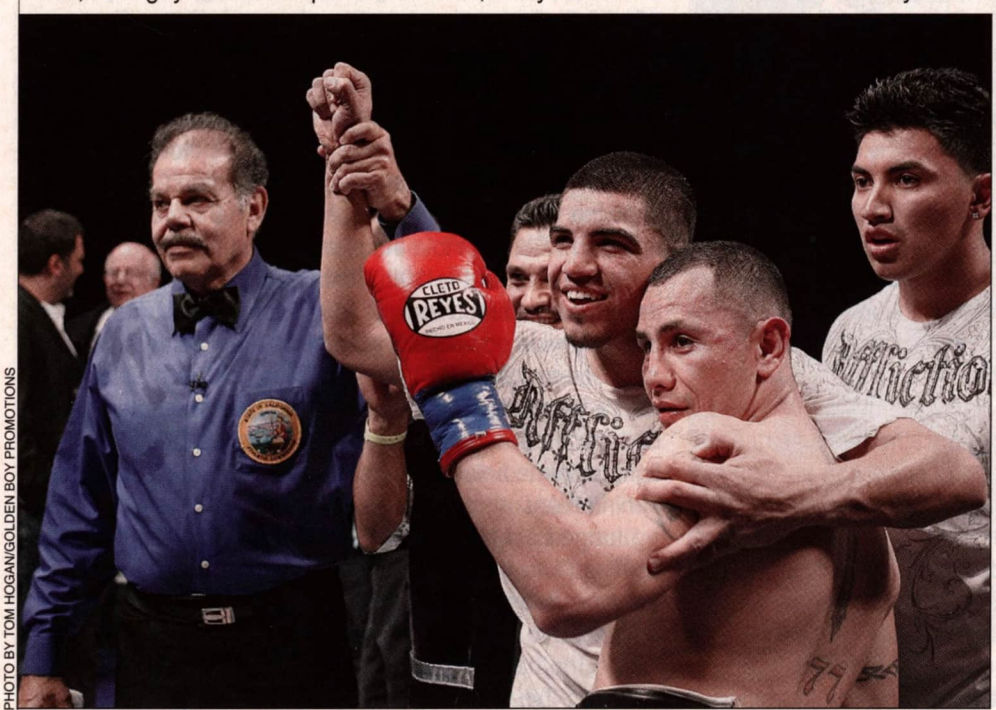


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Winner Ortiz and loser Alatorre embrace after fight

hand wallop, and Tello lost his balance and found himself squatting just inches above the canvas but somehow still on his feet. He had again dodged a count from Pabon, but he couldn't dodge Segura's punches. One after another crashed home until Pabon called for the stoppage with the brave but hopelessly overmatched Tello, 14-4 (6), still on his feet.

During his postfight interview with broadcaster Rich Marotta, Segura, 23-1-1 (19), called out RING champion Ivan Calderon, which is as meaningful a fight as can be made in the 108-pound division. It's also as contrasting a clash of styles as you can make in all of boxing, with pure puncher Segura taking on pure boxer Calderon.

Television: **Fox Sports Net/Fox Sports Espanol**
Promoters: **Top Rank, Promociones Zanfer**
(2-20-10)

Elio Rojas W 12 Guty Espadas Jr.

Merida, Mexico: One of the best-kept secrets in the sport, Rojas has been forced to become a road warrior due to neglect from his promoter, Don King. Rojas just continues to win impressively, however, as he continues to build his case for U.S. television dates in a hot division.

In his first defense of the WBC featherweight belt he took from Takahiro Aoh seven months before in Japan, Rojas ventured into the hometown of mandatory challenger Espadas and threw a near-shutout at the Poliforum Zamna.

Espadas, 126, had won seven straight fights before facing Rojas, 126, in a bid to regain the belt he lost to Erik Morales in 2001. He barely won a round. From the opening bell, the veteran Espadas, 45-8 (28), was pushing straight forward while Rojas, 22-1 (13), used his longer arms and footwork to inch his way backward and control the distance with a torrent of jabs and right hands. Rojas, Brooklyn, New York, via the Dominican Republic, caught Espadas with a pair of right uppercuts in the final 10 seconds of the opening round.

In the second, "The Kid" Rojas, 27, began moving forward more frequently when he attacked. He spun the Mexican's head with a right hand along the ropes a minute into the round, and he had Espadas, 35, missing badly in the final 10 seconds. Desperate for something to cheer bout, the hometown crowd chanted, "Yes you can!" in the third and roared when Rojas momentarily backpedaled into a corner.

Rojas picked up the pace in the fourth, when he continued to blast his opponent with a volume of jabs and right hands, with several uppercuts thrown into the mix. Espadas continued coming forward, and he landed a decent shot on occasion, but it was becoming obvious that he lacked the hand speed, lateral movement, and head movement to compete.

Espadas looked ready to fall in the fifth, when Rojas nailed him flush to the face on several occasions and had the former beltholder moving backward and swinging at air. Midway through the sixth, an Espadas counter left hook fired up the crowd and gave the hometown favorite a brief second wind. It was Espadas' best round, partially due to a slower pace from Rojas.

Rojas spent the first half of the seventh trying to outwork Espadas at close range, and then wisely went back to pummeling him from a distance with jabs and right hands. It was a critical shift. From that point, Espadas' best shots came with his head, including a headbutt early in the eighth that drew a grimace from Rojas and a warning from referee Hector Afu (Panama). Though the crowd overreacted whenever Espadas landed anything, including a short right hand early in the 10th, Rojas simply dominated. Espadas, who has stoppage losses to Morales, Rocky Juarez, and Darryl Pinckney on his record, never seemed to be in danger of falling, other than in the fifth.

Judge Max DeLuca (USA) scored it 120-108, while Alan Krebs (USA) and Gerald Ritter (USA) each had it 119-109. THE RING also scored it 119-109. In a loaded featherweight division, Rojas moved up to seventh in THE RING ratings.

Promoters: **Pepe Gomez, Don King Productions**
(2-20-10) ■

Rojas drives a right to Espadas' chin

PHOTO BY LUIS PEREZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Showdown

An extensive, analytical forecast of upcoming superfights and critical matches

Lightweight Title Eliminator

Michael Katsidis

Main Event 12 Rounds

Kevin Mitchell

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

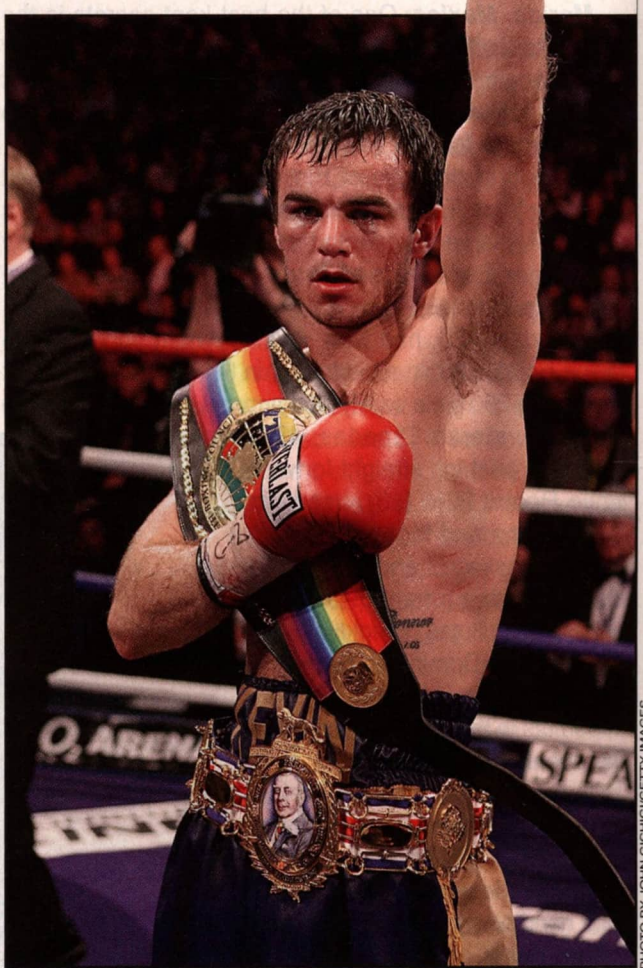


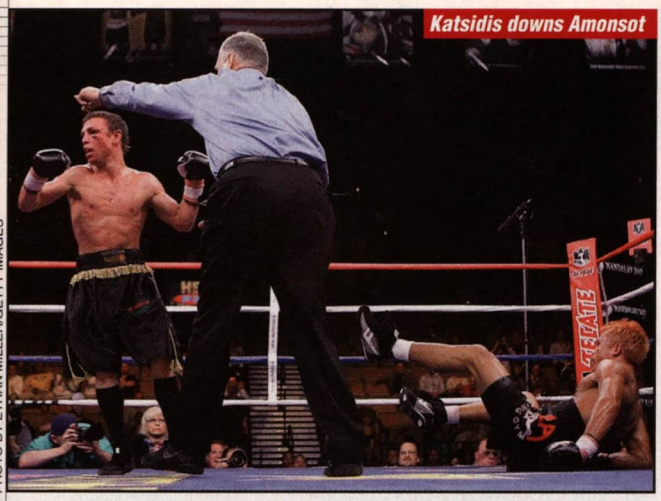
PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Whenever Michael "The Great" Katsidis steps into the ring, it's a fair bet that there will be blood. The powerfully built Greek-Aussie from Toowoomba likes nothing better than to slam-bang away, toe-to-toe, heart on sleeve. Win or lose, he'll be bruised, bleeding, and grinning from ear-to-ear when it's over. The unbeaten Kevin Mitchell, a tough kid from London's East End, is less predictable. He's a naturally aggressive fellow who loves a good, old-fashioned tear-up, but recently he's taken a more disciplined approach, which he held together in a superb display of back-foot boxing to trounce Breidis Prescott last December. So this one could well turn into a classic boxer-brawler encounter — although with Mitchell cheered on by the home crowd on May 15, he might just decide to go for broke. Either way, it should be a cracker.

Michael Katsidis

Kevin Mitchell

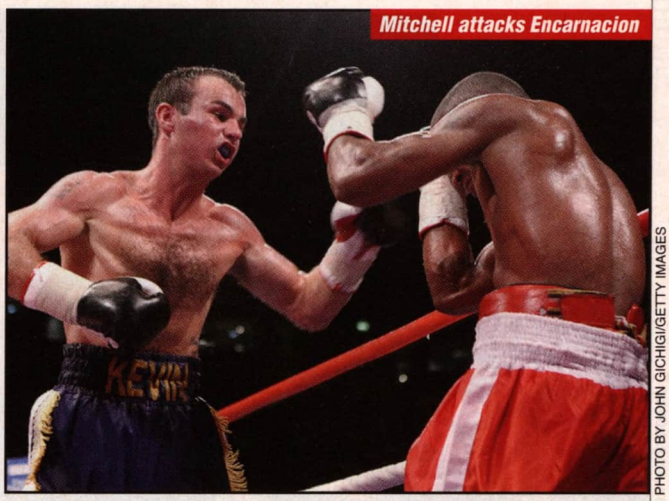
Record and World Rating



Katsidis downs Amonsot

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is 26-2 with 21 knockouts ... Had 75-6 amateur career ... Represented Australia at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, losing a 9-7 decision in second round ...Turned pro at 21 in December 2001, winning the Queensland lightweight title on a third-round knockout ... Won Australian lightweight title in second fight ... Later won Australian junior welterweight title ... Boxed on home soil for five years before winning WBO "interim" lightweight title in five in February 2007... Has since fought in U.S. except for one outing in the Philippines ... Successfully defended belt once before being stopped in 10 in second title defense ... Followed with points loss for minor belt ... Has since won three in a row ... Ranked second at lightweight by THE RING.



Mitchell attacks Encarnacion

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Is 31-0 with 23 knockouts ... Won British ABA (amateur) featherweight title in 2002 and was considered a potential Olympic gold medalist ... Instead, turned pro in July 2003, aged 18... Won Commonwealth super featherweight title, winning on points in October 2006 ... Won British junior lightweight title in March 2003 ... Made U.S. debut in June 2008 with fifth-round TKO ... Out for 14 months due to serious hand injury ... Was WBO's number-one junior lightweight contender but outgrew the division ... Returned at 135-pounds and won on points in December 2009, followed by a second-round knockout in February 2010 ... Ranked 10th at lightweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Katsidis wades in on Escobedo

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is 29 years old ... Stands 5'7" with a 66-inch reach ... Powerfully built, with chunky, muscular frame ... Heavy hands, but moderate hand speed ... Good endurance and reasonable chin (dropped four times, stopped once) ... Impressive physical strength ... Cuts and bruises easily.

Mitchell measures Mendoza

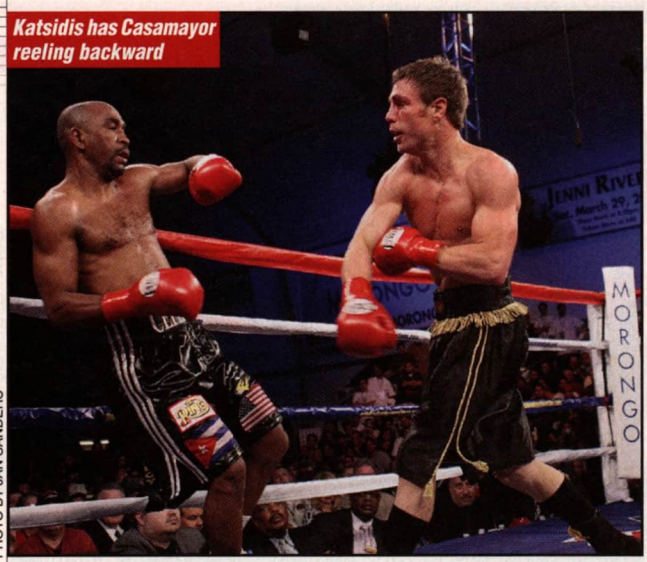
PHOTO BY DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

Is 25 years old ... Stands 5'8" with a 66-inch reach ... Slender but ripped ... Quick hands and impressive power ... Seems to have a good chin (dropped by Carl Johanneson, although officially ruled a slip) ... Tiny hands that damage easily (a knuckle on his left).

Michael Katsidis

Kevin Mitchell

Best Weapons



Katsidis has Casamayor reeling backward

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Mitchell plows a right into Prescott

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Extreme aggression, tenacity, and huge will to win ...Heavy left hook, short right cross, and uppercut with both hands ... Works well to the body.

Excellent balance, timing, and footwork ... Sharp jab ... Good combination puncher ... Right cross and left hook are knockout weapons

Previous Fight

Delivered impressive display of aggressive, high-pressure boxing to deservedly outpoint by split decision the 21-1 (13) American Vicente Escobedo in September 2009 on Mayweather-Marquez undercard ... Surged forward with his familiar, all-action swarming style, while Escobedo fought in counterpunching retreat ... Suffered cuts and a swollen jaw but seemed to have won easily by scores of 118-110, 115-113, with an extremely dubious 116-112 for Escobedo.

Flattened the 27-5 (8) Ignacio Mendoza, with a huge overhand right in the second round on February 13, 2010 ... This punch, which was followed by a left uppercut, lifted the Spaniard off his feet and he was counted out at the 1:24 mark ... Shaded a cautious opener, but advised to use more body work, throw combinations, and to counter the jab with the right ... Resulted in the best knockout of professional career.

Quality of Opposition

Ever since getting the better of Graham Earl (KO 5) over three years ago has fought at the top level ... Joel Casamayor (KO by 10), Juan Diaz (L 12), and Jesus Chavez (KO 8) are all former lightweight titlists, while Escobedo (W 12) and Czar Amonsot (W 12) were fringe contenders ... For five years fought exclusively on the undemanding Australian circuit, mainly at lightweight, but had three fights at junior welter or above.

Biggest win by far was wide, unanimous 12-round points victory over Breidis Prescott (who had flattened Amir Khan in one but subsequently lost on points to Miguel Vazquez) ... Boxed superbly to outclass the tall Colombian ... Other than that, only significant opponent was Carl Johanneson (KO 9), for the British junior lightweight title three years ago ... Came through some rough moments to prevail in nine.

Defense

His bobbing and weaving defense was effective at lower level ... He knows how to move his head, when he remembers, but has proved relatively easy to tag at elite level ... Comes forward constantly so he's not hard to find ... Most effective defensive asset may be incessant aggression, which means that most opponents are fighting off the back foot.

Has quick feet, good head movement, and sharp blocking and parrying technique, but it all depends on which version shows up ... When up against the short, powerful Johanneson, he opted to brawl and slipped plenty of stiff rights ... When up against the lethal beanpole Prescott, he fought more cautiously and avoided the hard stuff and romped home a wide winner.

Michael Katsidis

Kevin Mitchell

Style

Earl tastes a Katsidis right uppercut

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Relentlessly aggressive ... likes nothing better than a close-quarters punch-up ... Has high work rate and seldom throws anything that is not full-blooded ... Likes to thump away at the body ... At lower level his power was sufficient to overwhelm his opposition (20 knockouts in his first 22 fights), but has won only one of his last six inside the distance (despite several knockdowns).

Naturally aggressive, so he relishes a good punch-up, but you can be sure that trainer Jimmy Tibbs will instruct him to jab, pivot, and move against the stronger Katsidis ... In this mode, he likes to slide in and out, throwing blistering combinations ... Plenty of lateral movement ... His excellent footwork is one of the keys to his success ... But as soon as he senses weakness, he will blast away.

Mitchell crashes a left off Johanneson

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Questions

Can he cut off the ring to trap Mitchell on the ropes? Can he cope with Mitchell's superior speed and more advanced boxing skills? Will his face mark up and cut? Will he be hurt by partisan home crowd's potential influence on the referee or judges if it goes the distance?

Will he be able to keep the powerful Katsidis at arm's length? Can he cope with Katsidis' superior strength? Will he flounder in the face of Katsidis' greater elite-level experience? Will Mitchell's fragile left knuckle hold up? Will he get drawn into a punch-up?

The Outcome

Katsidis will wade in and chop away at Mitchell's body, and the Englishman will find it harder to keep away than he did against the slower Prescott. Sooner or later, Mitchell will be forced or tempted to punch it out, at least for a while, and will absorb several hard rights in the process. But, in the end, the Londoner's quicker hands, better balance, and tighter defense will prove decisive. Katsidis will mark up and cut and the referee will wave it off after the 10th round.

 (Continued from Page 26)

This would not be the same fighter Andre Rozier met at the Coney Island Boxing Club in Brooklyn. Ali was 11. Rozier, who has also been the chief second to New Yorkers such as Joe Greene, Danny Jacobs, Gary Stark Jr., and Curtis Stevens, is Ali's head trainer.

"He was a mouthy, precocious little Prince Naseem Hamed wannabe," Rozier said. "One day, Sadam was maybe about 12 years old. I told Sadam, 'I want you to put your gloves on and hit the bag.' He told me 'No.' I said, 'What? Put your gloves on and hit the bag.' He said 'No' again. I told Sadam, 'Get over here. You're gonna do 300 jumping jacks with two pound weights in your hands.'

"He looked at his father for a way out. And David just turned his back and whistled. Sadam didn't have anyone to help him. He started doing his jumping jacks and crying. I told him to count louder and asked him if he was ever going to tell me 'No' again. From that point on, I never had a problem with Sadam mouthing off."

The mental aspect taken care of, Rozier still had to contend with a pupil who mimicked Naseem Hamed's style.

"The thing that was funniest about it is he did a lot of the moves," Rozier said. "He would bounce. He would shake. He would shimmy. But he would get caught with punches. We started working on him using more balance, more defensive measures, and utilizing his jab."

Some trainers become father figures to their fighters. Rozier considers himself like an uncle to Sadam. David Ali has played and continues to play a pivotal role in his son's life.

"He was always there," said Sadam Ali. "I'd get ready and he'd take me. My dad's always supported me. Me and my dad have a great relationship. Not every father and son get along, especially within boxing. I know everything he did for me. My dad took me to so many tournaments and paid for the plane tickets and made sure everything was alright."

David Ali is glad Sadam hasn't forgotten all that was done for him. At the same time, David points out that he couldn't have been there for Sadam had other relatives not stepped in and helped him run the family business.

"It took a lot of time to take him to the next step, taking him to the gyms and going from state to state to compete," David Ali said. "If you ask me if I would ever do it again for my younger son, no, I wouldn't. That's how hard it is."

David Ali insisted Sadam finish high school, taking classes while training for the Olympics in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

"He's going to go and take college classes," David Ali said. "I don't want him just to do boxing. I want him to be a whole package all around."

For the moment, Sadam Ali is working with Rozier to become the complete package in the ring.

"He's improving steadily," Rozier said. "We're always working on new things. I'd like to see Sadam use his jab a bit more and settle down a little so he'll punch a bit harder. I want him to sit down on his punches. He's coming into the things I want him to be now. As a pro, you have to be very sharp and very aware so you're not getting caught. You're setting up traps for your opponent.

"He's very elusive. He will fire an armada of punches at you if you give him a chance. If you don't, he'll set it up, and when he gets close enough, he'll fire 20 or 30 punches at you. He likes to be showy in the ring: flashy combinations, quick moves, making his opponent miss, and then firing counters that you don't think he'd be able to land and he does. He likes to do it aggressively. If he keeps progressing, that's going to be one of his most positive attributes."

Ali has not yet signed with a promoter. "He's gonna stay a free agent just to show people out there he's worth the investment," said David Ali, who is helping manage his son's career.

Sadam believes all the time and effort he has invested will reap rewards. Like anybody with a talent, he has set high goals for himself.

"I want to be a world champion," he said. "Actually, I will be a world champion. It'll take hard work, dedication, and patience. I'm not in a rush. I'm taking fights when I can and learning from them. When it comes, it comes. It's not like I really need it right now. But I do want it." ■

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Ali uses his imposing jab on Bryan Abraham in scoring a four-round decision to keep his record spotless. Ali is willing to be patient, after a solid amateur career that saw him compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when he was the first Arab-American to ever represent the United States Olympic boxing team. Ali was attracted to boxing as a child by watching "Prince" Naseem Hamed, who's also of Yemeni descent, like Ali.

David P. Greisman is a Vermont-based freelance writer and a frequent contributor to a number of boxing websites.

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Dec. 2007: Calzaghe-Kessler, Hatton-Mayweather—Britain Puts Its Best Fists Forward. **Also Inside:** Erik Morales, Vazquez-Marquez, Nick Katsidis, Joey Gamache, *The Contender,* welterweights, home-town fighters.

Jan. 2008: Dancing With Disaster: Pretty Boy Won't Be Doing The Tango With Hatton. Also Inside: Jones-Trinidad preview, Alfonso Gomez, Israel Vasquez, U.K. vs. U.S.

Feb. 2008: A Superstar Is Born: Pavlik Revs Up The Engine That Drives The Sport. Also Inside: Pacquiao-Barrera II, Holyfield-Ibragimov, Andre Berto, Junior Witter, postponements. **Bonus Section:** 20 Greatest Welterweights.

March 2008: Cotto Crashes The Elite: "I'll Fight Any Big Name." Also Inside: Calzaghe-Kessler, Bika-Codrington, Mayorga-Vargas, Manny Pacquiao, Bobby Scanlon, Joe Calzaghe book excerpt, lightweights, 10 burning questions for 2008.

April 2008: Floyd Mayweather: Fighter Of The Year. **Also Inside:** 2007 In Review, Marquez-Pacquiao II preview, Regina Halmich, "Boxcasting."

May 2008: Marquez vs. Pacquiao: The Experts Pick The Winner Of The Long-Awaited Rematch. **Also Inside:** Roy Jones, Paul Malignaggi, Floyd Mayweather, Joe DeNucci, 2007 in pictures.

June 2008: Exit Strategy: Is Oscar Ready For His Biggest Challenge Ever? **Also Inside:** Calzaghe-Hopkins preview, Larry Holmes, Steve Cunningham, Pavlik-Taylor II, Paul Williams, Jack "The Nonpareil" Dempsey.

July 2008: The State Of The Game: Our Exclusive Annual Report. **Also Inside:** Vazquez-Marquez III, Pacquiao-Marquez II, heavyweight slump, Ricky Hatton, Robert Guerrero, Billy Petrolle.

Aug. 2008: Double Champ Joe Calzaghe: If He Wants To Defend Both Belts … Let Him! **Also Inside:** Cotto-Margarito preview, Tarver-Woods & Dawson-Johnson, Casamayor-Campbell, Kevin Rooney, The Ring visits Cuba & Pacquiao in Philippines.

Sept. 2008: Antonio Margarito: Is He The Man To Cut Down Cotto? **Also Inside:** De La Hoya-Forbes, Amir Khan, best & worst managed fighters, "long-timers," *American Son* excerpt.

Fall 2008: All-Star Report Cards. **Also Inside:** Hatton-Lazcano, Kelly Pavlik, Timothy Bradley, Eddie Perkins, U.S. Olympic team.

Oct. 2008: Manny Pacquiao—New Worlds To Conquer. **Also Inside:** Chris Arreola, Floyd Mayweather, Holly Holm, Paul Malignaggi, 10 moments that changed boxing.

Nov. 2008: Antonio Margarito: Why Would Anyone Want To Fight This Man? **Also Inside:** Pavlik-Hopkins preview, Klitschko vs. Klitschko, Dawson-Tarver, Calzaghe-Jones preview, Enzo Calzaghe, Hall of Fame.

Dec. 2008: Oscar vs. Pac-Man Superfight Special! 10 Burning Questions, Big Man vs. Little Man, Experts Picks. **Also Inside:** Beijing Olympics, Ricky Hatton, Joshua Clottey, Juan Manuel Marquez, Prescott-Khan, boxing & race.

Jan. 2009: Bernard Hopkins: A Once In A Lifetime Phenomenon. **Also Inside:** Klitschko brothers, Paul Williams, *Contender 4,* Mosley-Mayorga, Chad Dawson, The Ring 100.

Feb. 2009: A Look Ahead To 2009. **Also Inside:** Hatton-Malignaggi, Calzaghe-Jones, Haye-Barrett, Darchinyan-Mijares, Juan Manuel Marquez, super middleweights.

March 2009: Fighter Of The Year Manny Pacquiao: Can He Carry The Load From The Man He Conquered? **Also Inside:** 2008 in review, best fighter poll, Juan Manuel Lopez, Baby Arizmendi.

April 2009: Crucial Decision! A Mayweather Comeback Could Reshape Boxing History. **Also Inside:** David Haye, Brian Mitchell, Pacquiao vs. Armstrong, footwork, Battle of the Legends.

May 2009: Pacquiao vs. Hatton—20 Experts Pick The Winner. **Also Inside:** Mosley-Margarito, Mayweather vs. Roach, Andre Berto, Vic Darchinyan, Cotto & Pavlik, weigh-in controversy.

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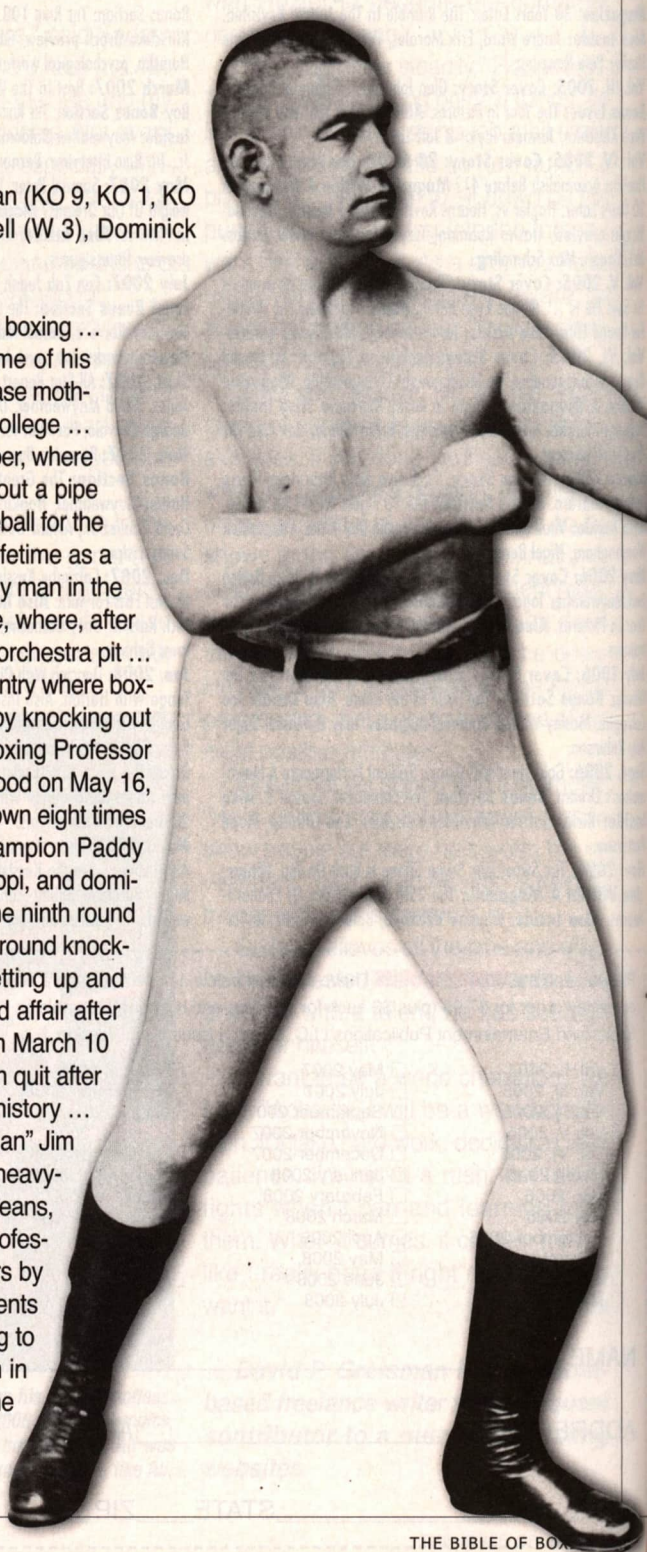
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

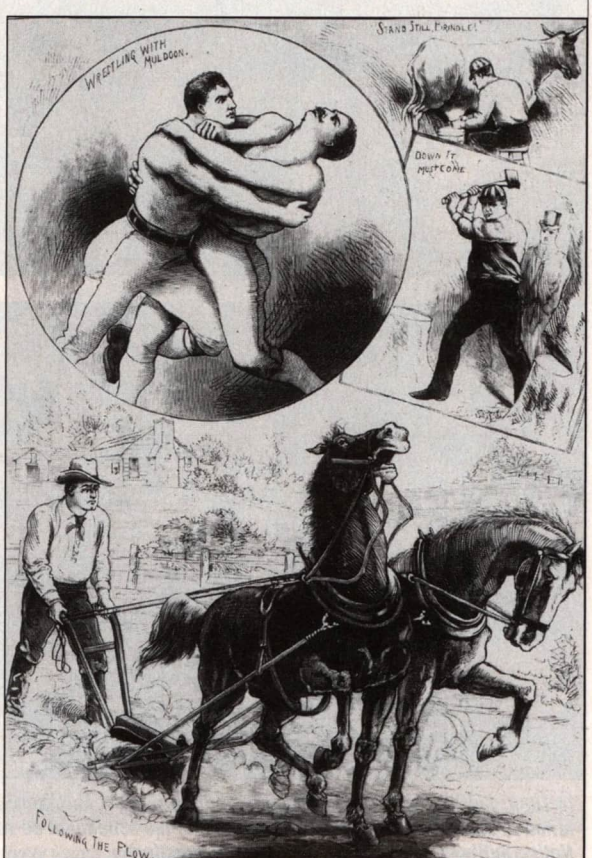
John L. Sullivan

Birthdate: October 15, 1858
Date of Death: February 2, 1918
Birthplace: Roxbury, Massachusetts
Nickname: The Boston Strong Boy
Weight Classes: Heavyweight
Record: 38-1-1 (32)
Titles Held: World heavyweight
Best Performances: Cockey Woods (KO 5), Paddy Ryan (KO 9, KO 1, KO 3), Jake Kilrain (KO 75), James McCoy (KO 1), Charlie Mitchell (W 3), Dominick McCaffrey (W 6), John Flood (KO 8)
Year of IBHOF Inductions: 1990
Background: Considered by many the father of modern-day boxing … Born to Irish immigrant parents … Inherited the husky 5'10" frame of his mother, rather than the 5'3" build of his father … Attempted to appease mother's desire that he become a priest by briefly attending Boston College … Worked various jobs from hod carrier, to tinsmith, to assistant plumber, where he once supposedly broke his employer's jaw in an argument about a pipe … Surprisingly nimble and athletic … Declined an offer to play baseball for the Cincinnati Red Stockings … Built a reputation that would last his lifetime as a teenager in barroom brawls, with his famous mantra "I could lick any man in the house" … Entered the world of pugilism in 1877 at an opera house, where, after taking a cheap shot to the face, he slugged Tom Scannel into the orchestra pit … Arrested numerous times for fighting exhibitions in areas of the country where boxing was outlawed … Began touring in 1878 and made pro debut by knocking out Cockey Woods in Boston … Went on exhibition circuit in 1880, boxing Professor Mike Donovan and former champion Joe Goss … Battled John Flood on May 16, 1881, on a barge anchored in the Hudson River, knocking Flood down eight times before finishing him in the eighth round … Met heavyweight champion Paddy Ryan for the title on February 7, 1882, in Mississippi City, Mississippi, and dominated him in the bare-knuckle bout before putting an end to it in the ninth round to win heavyweight champion of the world … Recovered from first-round knockdown by English champion Charlie Mitchell on May 14, 1883, getting up and dominating Mitchell before police intervened to stop the one-sided affair after three rounds. The two fought again in 1888 in a 39-round draw on March 10 in France … Arguably scored his greatest victory when Jake Kilrain quit after 75 rounds in what was the last great bare-knuckle fight in boxing history … Took three years off touring after Kilrain victory, taking on "Gentleman" Jim Corbett during the tour dressed in complete evening attire … Lost heavyweight title to Corbett (KO by 21) on September 7, 1892, in New Orleans, Louisiana, under Marques of Queensberry rules … Never fought professionally again after suffering Corbett loss … Filled retirement years by acting in bit parts and traveling the country for speaking engagements … Became staunch advocate for boxing after his career, escaping to Massachusetts farm, after he squandered a supposed $1-million in winnings … His popularity helped propel the sport of boxing into the mainstream … Overindulgent lifestyle caught up with him in 1918, when he died at the relatively young age of 59.



In 1883, Sullivan first cemented his claim as world heavyweight champion after getting up from a first-round knockdown against British champion Charley Mitchell to win in three rounds. This illustration was from the 1888 rematch in France that ended in a 39-round draw.

Formal portrait of Sullivan as a young man.



In order to shed superfluous flesh and strengthen his muscles after years of prodigious drinking, Sullivan hired wrestler William Muldoon to help whip him into shape for his fight with Jake Kilrain. As is evident in this illustration, training methods were much different from those today.

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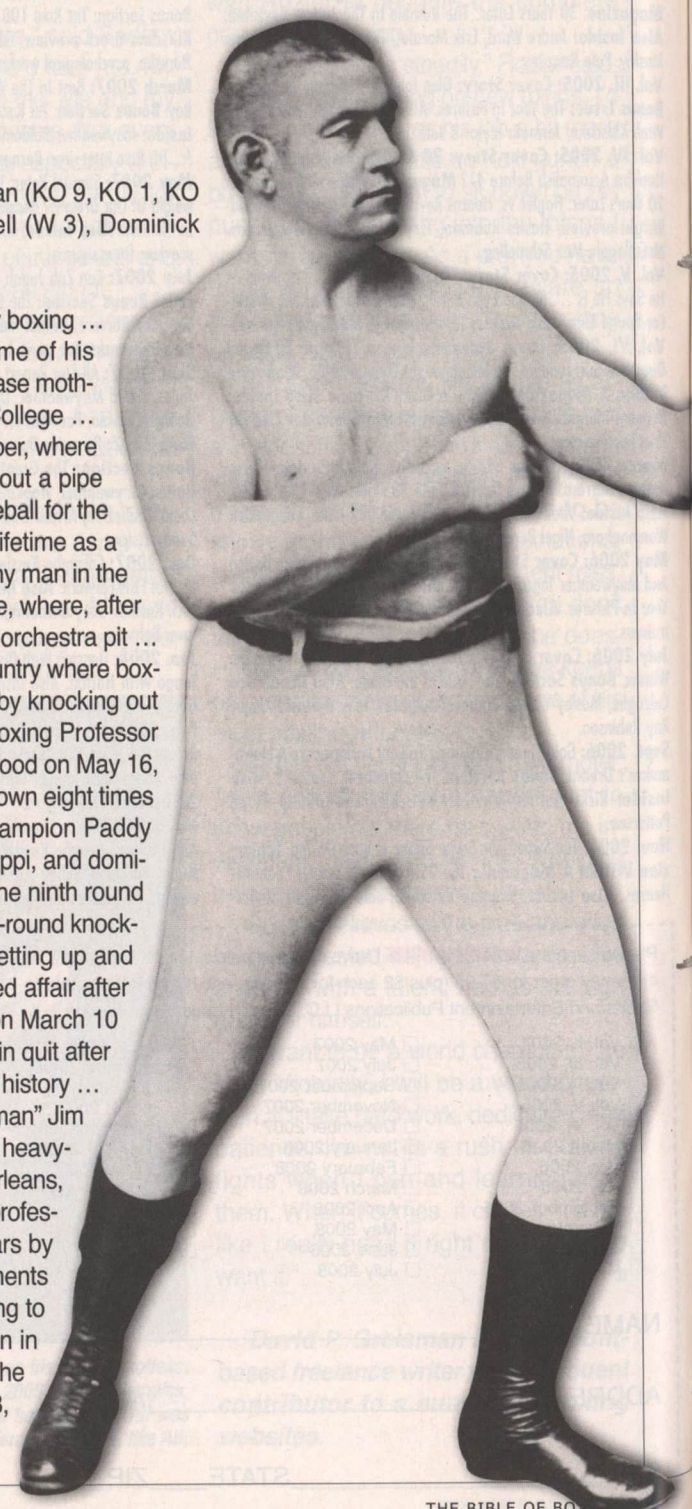

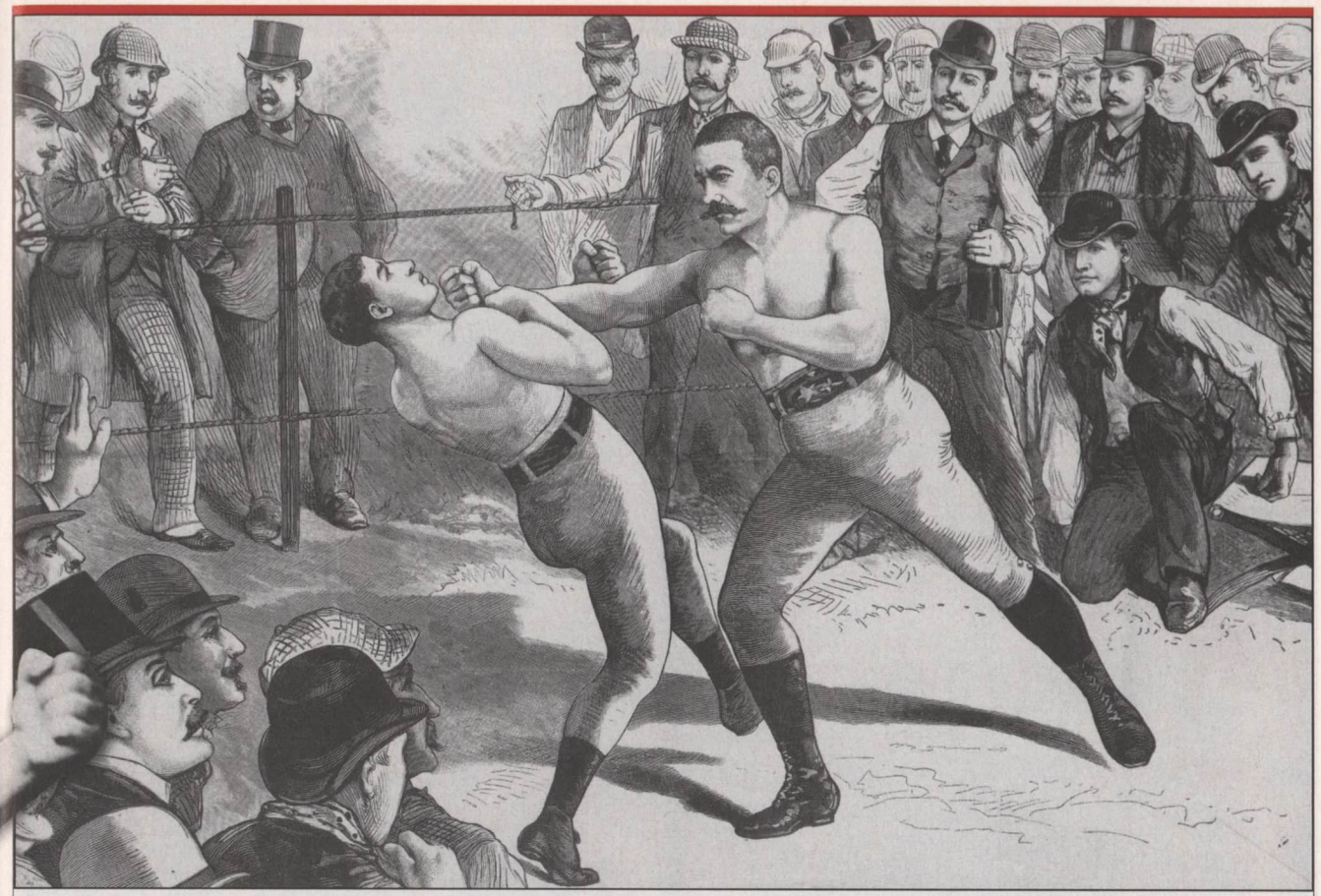

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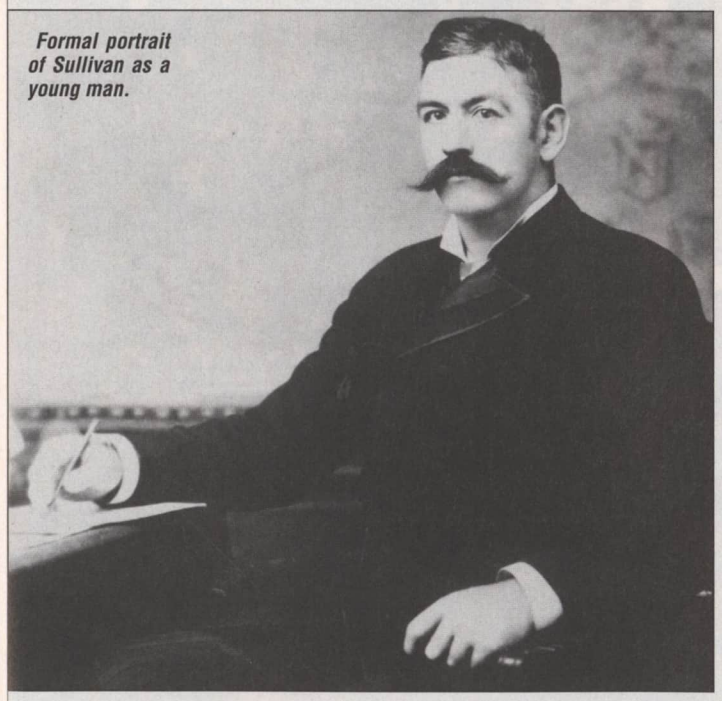

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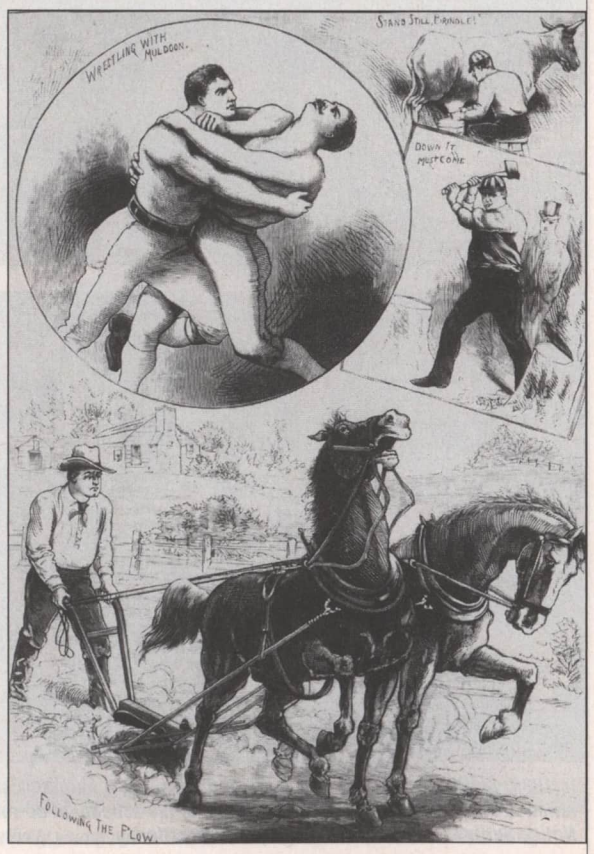

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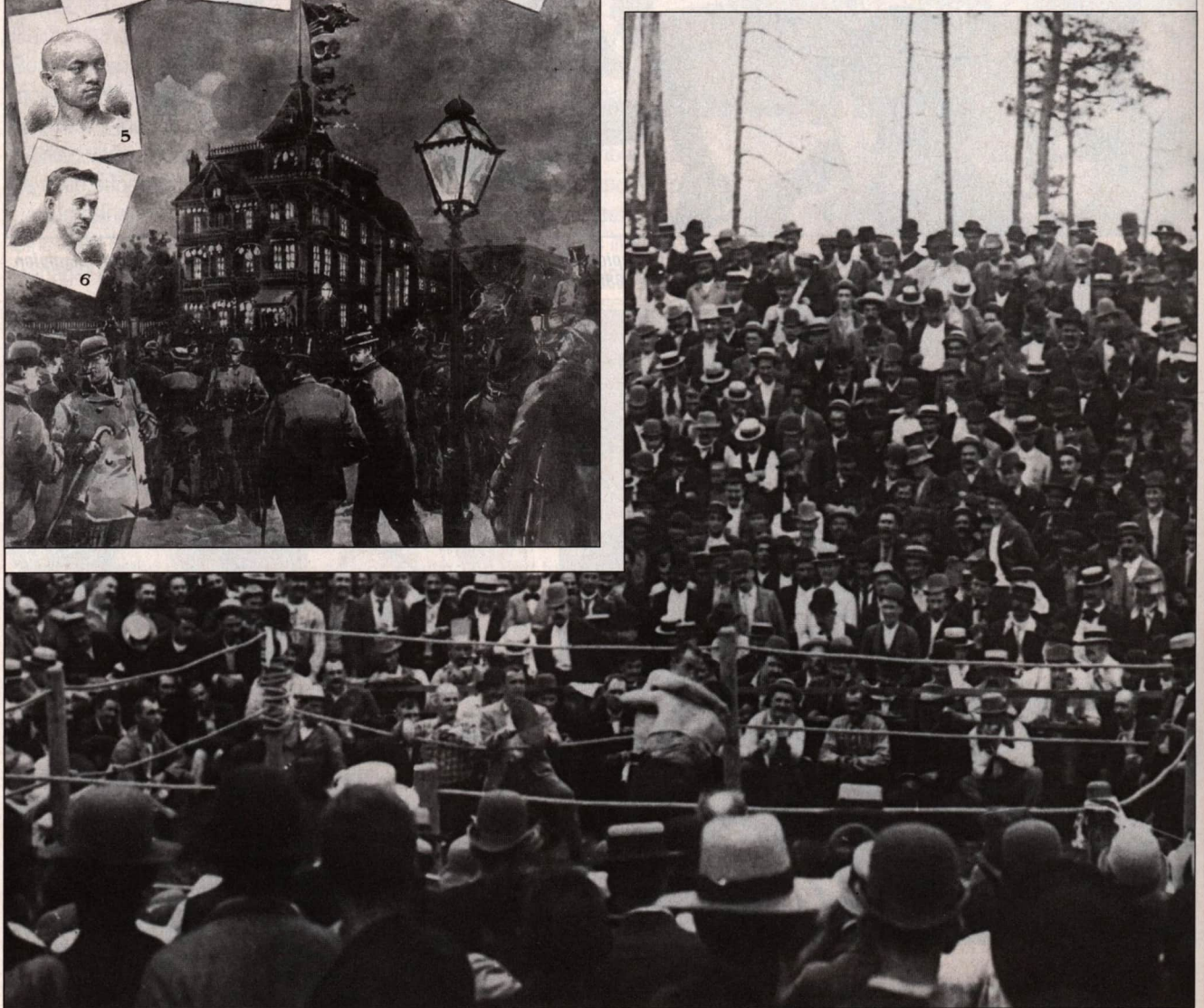
The citizens of Boston collected $10,000 to purchase Sullivan this gold belt, which was studded with 397 diamonds.

The Sullivan-Jim Corbett bout in 1892 headed boxing's first Carnival of Champions, a three-day affair that took place at the Olympic Club in New Orleans. Lightweight champion Jack McAuliff (No. 3) knocked out Billy Myers (No. 4) on September 5, featherweight champion George Dixon (No. 5) beat Jack Skelly (No. 6) on September 6, and Corbett stopped Sullivan on September 7.



In 1889, Sullivan and Kilrain engaged in the last great bare-knuckle fight in boxing history. The two went back and forth over 75 rounds before Kilrain failed to answer the bell for the 76th round of the scheduled 80-round fight. Boxing then more resembled an MMA fight than a modern boxing match. Notice Sullivan and Kilrain locked up like wrestlers.

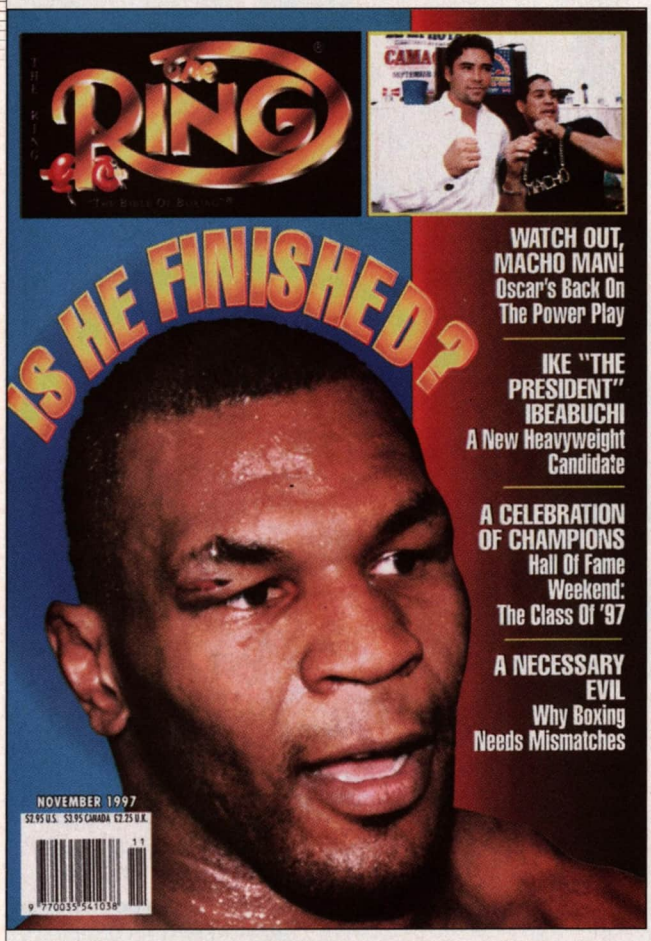
A who's who of heavyweight champions, featuring the legendary Sullivan, shaking hands with Jim Jeffries, and "Gentleman" Jim Corbett, wearing a white shirt and tie, standing to Sullivan's right. That's Joe Choynski between and slightly behind Sullivan and Jeffries.

Sullivan's funeral in Roxbury, Massachusetts, was heavily attended. He died at the relatively young age of 59 but left a legacy that is still admired today.

THE RING Flashback

Through the years with "The Bible of Boxing"

November 1997



COVER STORY: "Is He Finished" is the account of "The Bite Fight" aftermath and what Mike Tyson's future held. RING contributor William Dettloff writes the main piece, centering on "Iron Mike" getting his boxing license revoked by the Nevada State Athletic Commission. Dettloff makes sure to point out that, "the former champion could apply for reinstatement at the end of one year, and every year thereafter." Dettloff also states that almost everyone in boxing knows "that the moment the year is over, Tyson's time will have been served, so to speak, and his sentence done." Dettloff concludes by saying that if Tyson doesn't face Evander Holyfield a third time, he'll face someone else and "we'll be watching, even if the rest of the world isn't."

Steve Farhood tackles the actual fight in a sidebar titled, "The Fight Before The Bite." But it sounds as if there was as much fighting after the bite, when Tyson had to be restrained from rushing Holyfield's corner, and another brawl almost erupted in the stands when two men pelted the departing Tyson with cups of soda.

Farhood also takes a playful swipe at fouling in "Fouling: A Fighter's Checklist," opening with "Sink your teeth into this: Biting is bad, but there are other acts of malevolence inside the prize ring." Farhood covers everything from headbutts, to lacing, to elbow-bending to, finally, biting, most times resorted to when one fighter grows uncontrollably frustrated. Farhood notes, "It's not usually a calculated violation, nor a particularly disturbing one—until now." Farhood also writes, "Funny, but none of these infractions ends a fight as quickly as a *legal* punch to the chops."

After the Bite Fight, Tyson went 5-3 with 2 no-contests the remainder of his career. He is eligible for the Hall of Fame in 2010 as his last fight was in 2005 against Kevin McBride.

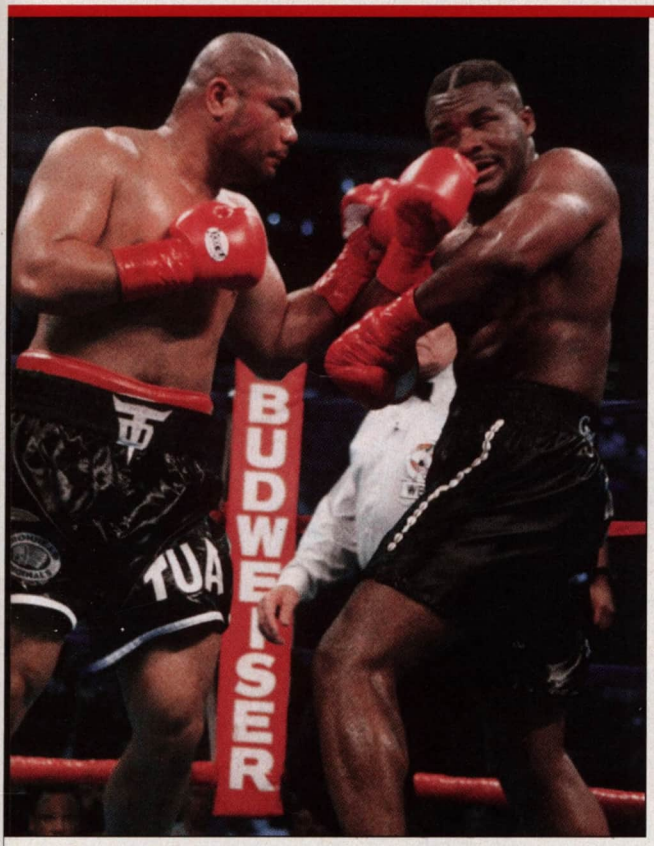
"Ike 'The President' Ibeabuchi: A New Heavyweight Candidate" by Bob Mladinich focuses on Nigerian heavyweight Ike Ibeabuchi, a rising star in the heavyweight division after scoring a unanimous decision over David Tua. The battle turned into a Fight of the Year candidate, spurred by a combined 1,730 punches thrown between them—then a heavyweight record since CompuBox had been keeping stats. Mladinich writes "From all indications, Ibeabuchi, while an extremely articulate, sensible, God-fearing man, loves to fight."

We found out later not much of that was actually true about "The President," who pled guilty in 2001 to battery with intent

World Champions

(THE RING did not have a championship policy in 1997, so the fighters listed below in each weight division are THE RING's number-one contenders for the period ended July 10)

Heavyweight: Evander Holyfield
Cruiserweight: Nate Miller
Light Heavyweight: Dariusz Michalczewski
Super Middleweight: Frankie Liles
Middleweight: Bernard Hopkins
Junior Middleweight: Terry Norris
Welterweight: Oscar De La Hoya
Junior Welterweight: Vince Phillips
Lightweight: Phillip Holiday
Junior Lightweight: Genaro Hernandez
Featherweight: Naseem Hamed
Junior Featherweight: Junior Jones
Bantamweight: Mbulelo Botile
Junior Bantamweight: Johnny Tapia
Flyweight: Mark Johnson
Junior Flyweight: Saman Sorjaturong



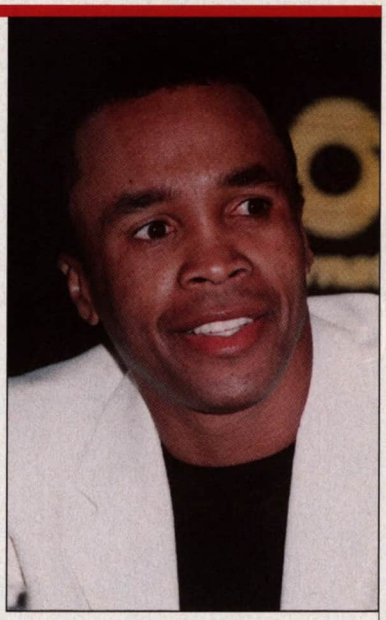
Ibeabuchi and Tua engaged in a war

to commit a crime and attempted sexual assault. He is eligible for release in 2012. He was later diagnosed in prison as being bipolar. His three attempts at parole were denied.

"A Necessary Evil" by Eric Bottjer explores the relevance of why boxing needs mismatches. With limited TV budgets, the story theorizes, it's difficult finding a middle ground with promoters who want to put on good fights for the least amount of money and lowest amount of risk. Hall of Fame promoter Don Chargin chimed in on the importance of mismatches, saying, "The name of the game is to build up talent. If every fight was an even one, you'd kill your talent and attractions."

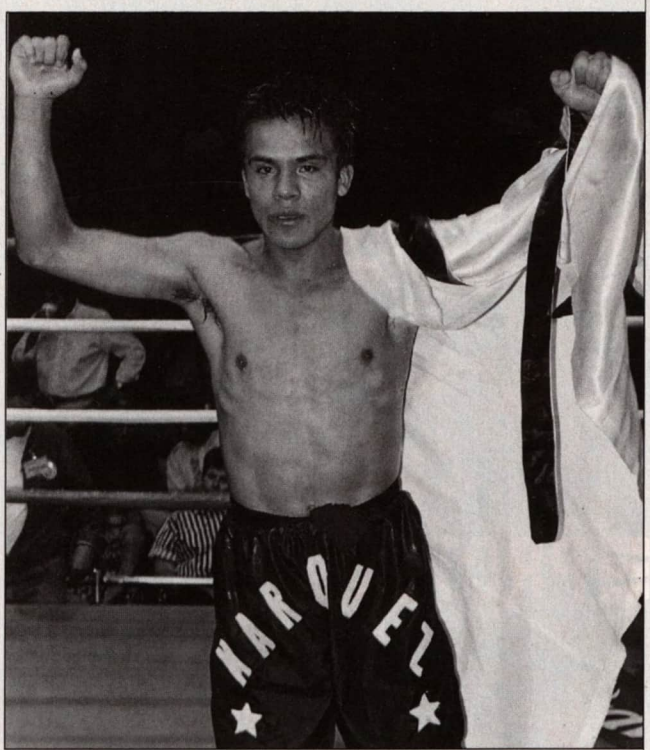
"Watch Out Macho Man" by William Dettloff looks at the upcoming fight between WBC welterweight titlist Oscar De La Hoya and Hector "Macho Man" Camacho. "The Golden Boy" was also in a transition phase of his career, changing trainers, from Jesus "The Professor" Rivero to Emanuel Stewart, who was brought in to help add more firepower in De La Hoya's considerable arsenal. Camacho was enthused by his victory over the depleted, shopworn Sugar Ray Leonard. It didn't help. De La Hoya dominated Camacho by unanimous scores in retaining the welterweight WBC belt.

"A Celebration Of Champions" by Ed Maloney captures one of the most memorable Hall of Fame inductions ceremonies ever, when Sugar Ray Leonard, Don King, and Jose Torres were all inducted in the Hall of Fame class of 1997. While Leonard enjoyed the most attention, King brought the largest entourage, with more than 300 family, friends, and former titlists all coming to see the electric-haired one get inducted. But as King is wont to do, controversy stirred when several media members and Hall of Fame weekend regulars opted not to attend because of King's induction. Other notables in that '97 class were Chalky Wright, Pete Herman, Freddie Welsh, Freddie Miller, Joe Jeanette, and bare-knuckle boxers Tom Molineaux and Dutch Sam.



Leonard was a very popular figure during Hall of Fame weekend

"New Face Update" is Farhood's look back at the previous 12 months of "New Faces" features that appeared in THE RING. This is a deep, talented class that is highlighted by three future world champions, Juan Manuel Marquez, Glen Johnson, and Joel Casamayor. It also includes future titlists Jesus Chavez, Willie Jorrin, Daniel Santos, and Vassiliy Jirov, along with contenders Billy Irwin, Angel Vazquez, and Dale Brown. Of all the assessments given these budding fighters, Farhood was right on when he wrote "a sure bet to win a world title" about Marquez. ■



Juan Manuel Marquez was on the brink of stardom when he appeared in "New Faces" in 1997

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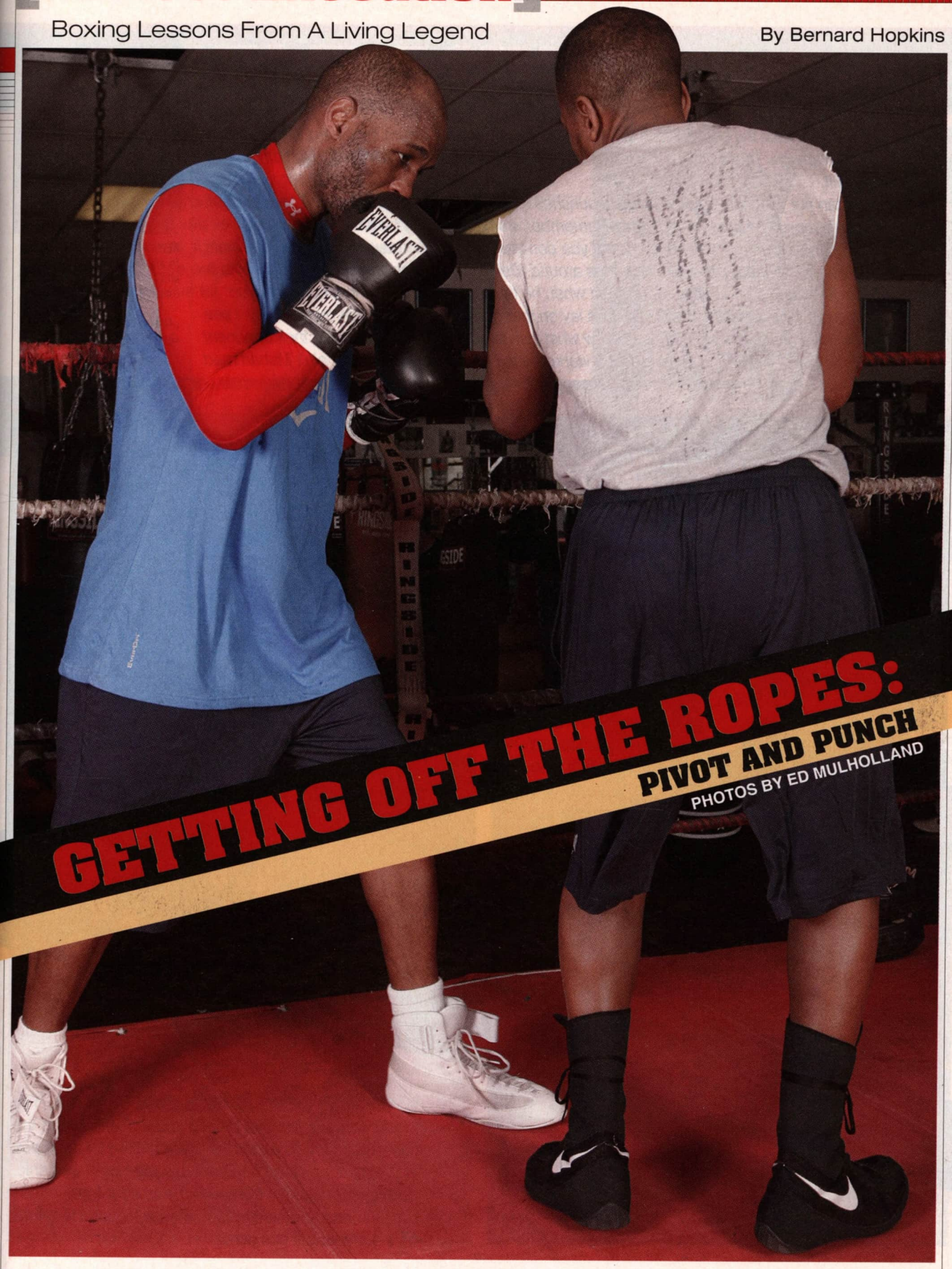
Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



GETTING OFF THE ROPES:

PIVOT AND PUNCH

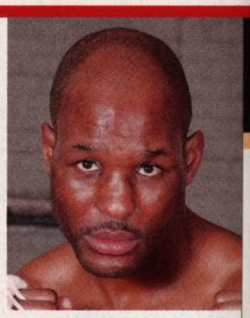
PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

By this time you know that if you can, it's always good to get your opponent on the ropes where he's trapped and can't get away from you. You get your man on the ropes or in the corner there's nowhere for him to go; he's got to fight his way off. By the same token, if you get trapped on the ropes you're not in the best position either, unless you know how to turn things around and make them to your advantage. That's what this game is about: using positioning and smarts to get advantage and hold on to it.

Sure, you can put your chin down and throw punches to fight your way off the ropes. The crowd will love it, but your job is to be smarter than that. Remember, it's hit and don't be hit.

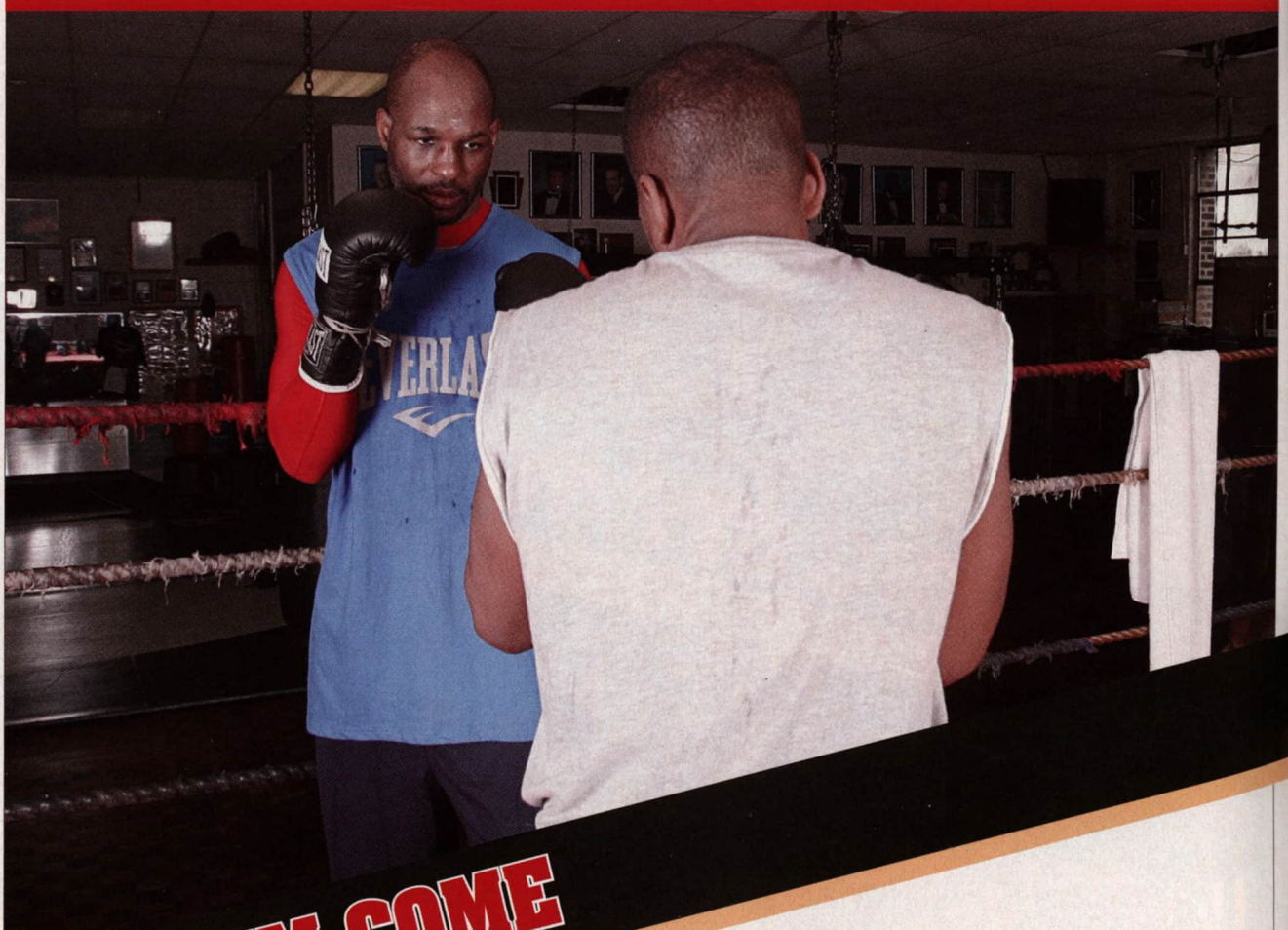
Don't take punches unless you have to. And you don't have to if you know how to use your brain and your legs to get off the ropes and turn things around. Believe me, there's nothing better than outthinking your man and turning things around just when he thinks he's got you where he wants you.

Believe this too: The worst thing you can do is lay on the ropes and let your man punch away. I see too many kids doing that because they don't know what else to do or because they think their opponent will get tired. It doesn't work. The Rope-a-Dope worked one time in history and you ain't Muhammad Ali. This is how it's done. Arnold Joseph and I show you how.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

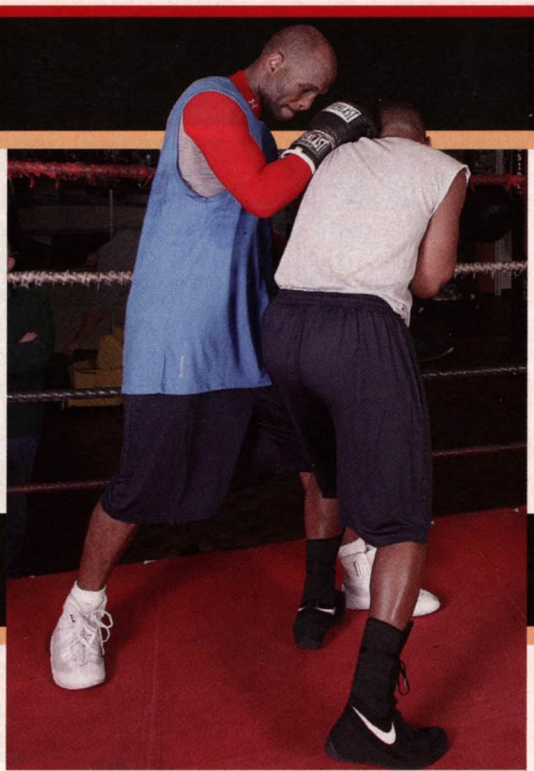
(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)



LET HIM COME

SO YOU'RE ON THE ROPES. DON'T PANIC. DON'T RUN. You practice this in the gym so you know what to do in the fight. Too many guys don't practice getting off the ropes in the gym, so when it happens in the ring they panic. Your back is against the ropes. Keep your form: hands up, chin down, eyes straight ahead. Relax. He thinks he's got you. Let him come.

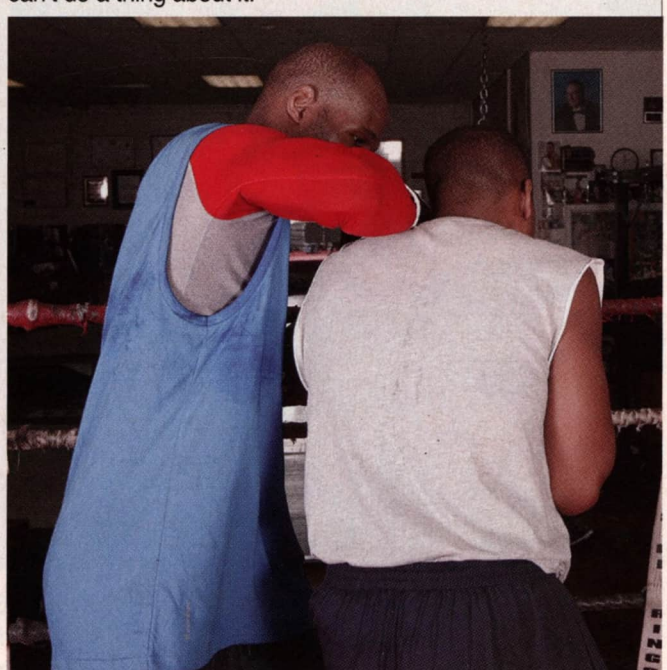
PIVOT TO THE SIDE



WHEN HE GETS CLOSE, PIVOT ON YOUR LEAD FOOT TO EITHER THE LEFT OR RIGHT (I'm going to the right here) and swing that rear leg around. Now look what you've got: He's off balance because he was moving in and you've used his momentum against him. And look at my right arm, it's pressing against his shoulder. I'm using that to help spin me out and also to push him off balance. He's there to be hit. You've turned the tables.

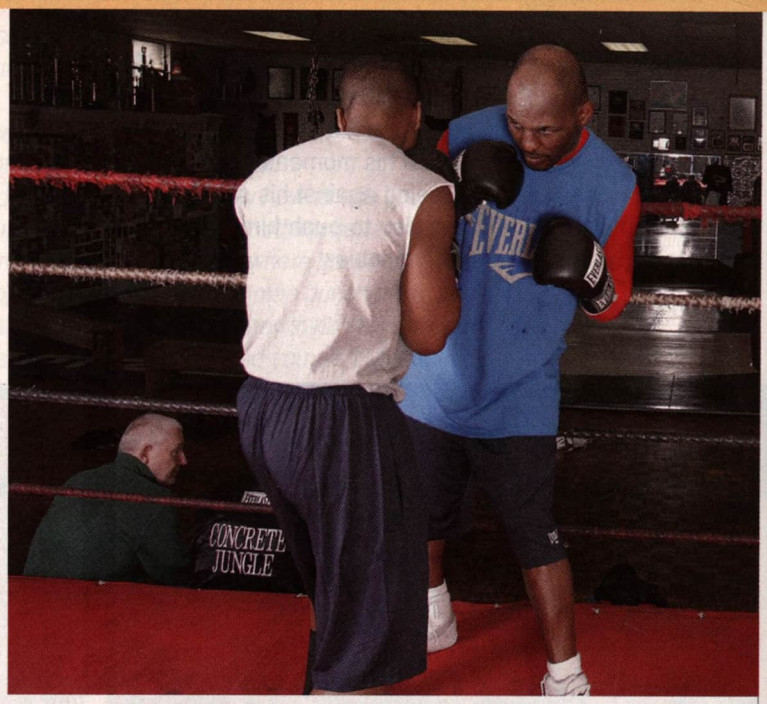
TAKE THE OPENING

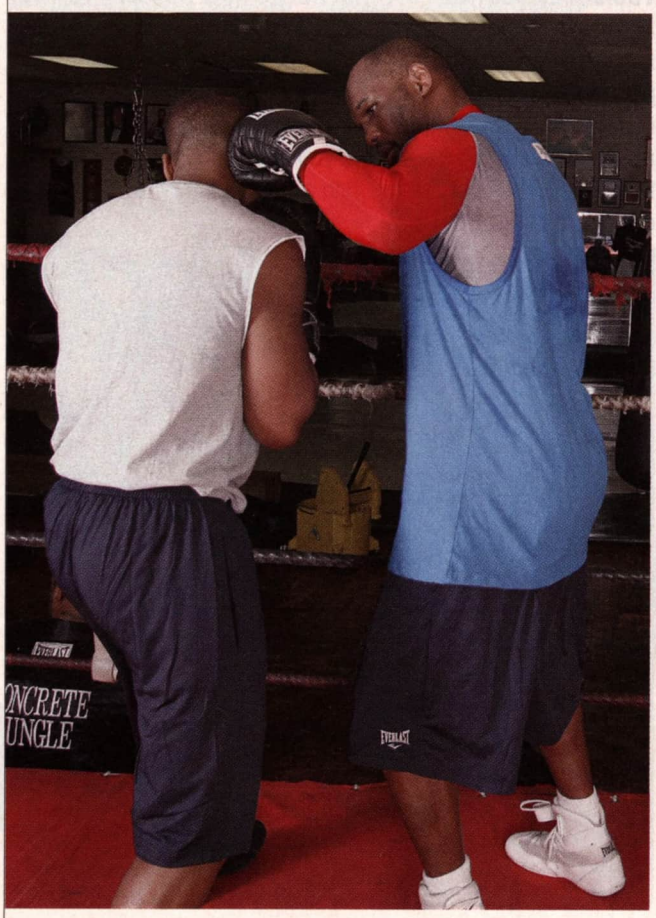
YOU COULD JUST GET OFF THE ROPES NOW AND GET TO THE CENTER OF THE RING, but why would you when you've got your man in position to get hit and you're in charge? Look at the picture on the left. I'm in perfect punching position—hands up, eyes on my opponent, perfect balance. He can't do a thing to me. If you walk away from this, you haven't been paying attention. You come over the top with a right to the head. Bam. He can't do a thing about it.

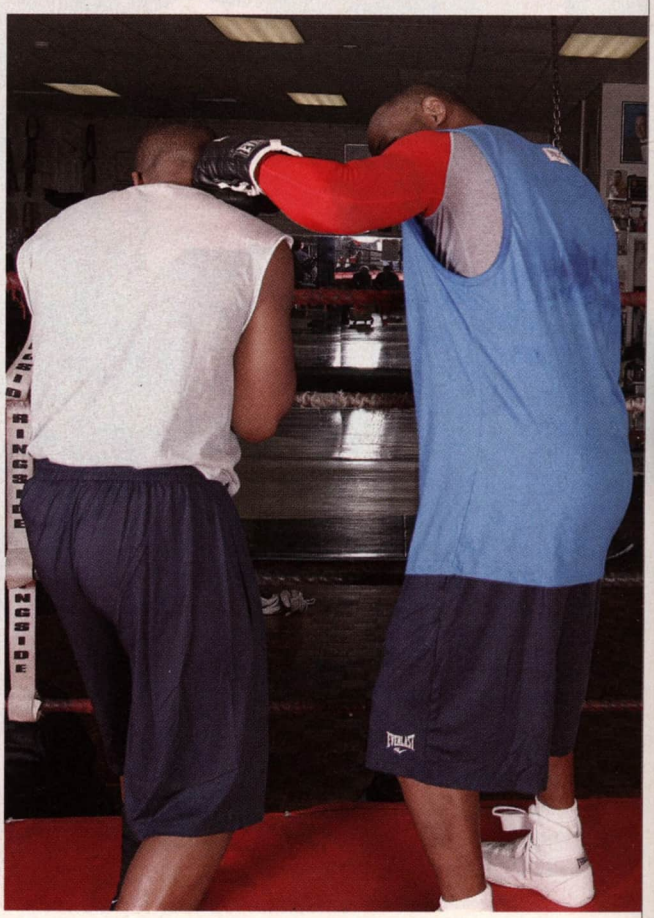


GOING THE OTHER WAY

HERE'S THE SAME THING BUT PIVOTING OUT TO THE LEFT. Let him come, pivot out, punch, and if you can, punch again. A double left hook is a good way to go. After that, I can do whatever I want and my opponent is in no position to stop me. All he can do is take the punches. Again, like everything else, you want to practice this in the gym over and over so when you do it in a fight, it comes naturally and the execution is perfect.







THE WRONG WAY

WANT TO GET BEATEN UP OR HAVE THE REFEREE STOP THE FIGHT BECAUSE HE THINKS YOU'RE GETTING HURT? Get against the ropes, close your eyes, and put your hands up. Or slide along the ropes hoping you can get away or clinch if your opponent stops punching. That's not the way to do it. That's what he wants you to do. You do that, you're giving him permission to knock you out.

By Michael Rivest

Not Too Old To Master A New Craft

Many of us can remember a time when people over 40 were supposed to start taking it easy. Exercise meant going for a walk. Running was out of the question unless somebody was chasing you with a knife, or maybe a summons. And boxing? You'd have to be plain crazy.

Baby boomers have changed the cultural landscape in many ways over the last 30 years, but who would have dreamed there would be such a thing as "Masters Boxing?" These are not paunchy accountants hitting a bag in their basements; they're men and women over 35—often *way* over 35—in phenomenal shape, and in a real ring taking and throwing real punches.

"It's actually the purest form of boxing because it's done for no other reason than for the love of the sport," said Manny Fernandez, who has been the driving force behind the recent growth of masters boxing. "I started a website six years ago," Manny said, referring to www.mastersboxingdivision.com, a site that has become a worldwide checkpoint for interested folks.

"In no time, I started getting e-mails from Australia, Russia, Europe, and Asia because if you're over 35," the age when amateur boxing has historically stopped thinking of you, "and want to box competitively, you don't know where to start. So when they Google 'Masters Boxing,' they find my site," he said.

And a lot of people are finding Fernandez. Sixty-two year old Dr. Kenneth Brezinski, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Illinois in Chicago and the 140-pound Ringside Masters Champion, puts it this way: "I didn't know where to begin in 2004. I had the misfortune of being born on the *right* side of the tacks," he said, laughing. "Even though boxing was my first love, I had no way to try it out as a kid. And as an adult, I had no idea I could still do it."

"But Manny needs help," Brezinski continued. "He's got the website and is spreading the word, yet there are so many more people like me out there who think there's no way." But Brezinski has another, more personal reason why he wants people to find their way to Fernandez' website—the good Professor needs opponents.

"I won the Ringside World Championship by winning one fight," he said with frustration and a little undeserved embarrassment. "There just weren't any people at my weight and age range."

Masters matches are made in the same way as all USA Boxing matches—according to weight and experience. But Masters have the added requirement that they must be within 10 years of each other, up or down. That means if you're 50, despite how willing you may be to show some 19-year-

PHOTO BY MANNY FERNANDEZ

Steve Cruise and Ron Guidry (not the former Yankees' pitcher) still have some fight in them

old whipper-snapper that you still know how, it isn't gonna happen. You'll face somebody who's between 40 and 60.

"As with any USA Boxing-sanctioned activity," Fernandez said, "the safety of the boxers comes first."

Dr. Brezinski may soon get his wish though. "Using the Annual Ringside Tournament as an example," said Fernandez, "62 masters competed in 2008, but there were 110 in 2009. And we're expecting at least twice as many again this year, and likely a lot more than that, judging by the number of people who've been asking about it."

Many of those combatants will be women. Forty-nine-year-old Jackie Atkins is the executive director of a national communications firm by day, but when she punches out, she, well, keeps punching. Atkins is the 2009 National Golden Gloves Champion in the 152-pound division. She wants you to know she's very feminine and laughs at the stereotype that typically gets attached to women boxers.

"Masters Boxing is best understood as just another competitive sport," Atkins said. "People are often surprised at how much the women who do it are simply great athletes. It's hardly an indication that they lack femininity."

And while Fernandez needs help, as Brezinski said, he's not the country's only minister of masters boxing. Bruce Silverglade, owner of the historic Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn, has been preaching the word even longer. Silverglade started his first white collar boxing program in 1988. For the past two years, Gleason's has operated a Masters Clinic and Show, a three-day program that consists of training and discussions, culminating in a masters boxing event.

"Masters Boxing is here to stay, and it's only going to keep growing," Silverglade said. "'Boxing is for the young' is just an old stereotype."

This year, of the 50 masters who attended Gleason's program, 28 men and women—ages 35-60—gloved up and got it on the final day of the Clinic and Show.

So if you've wanted to box ever since you saw Carmen Basilio and Sugar Ray go at it in 1958, but never had the chance to do it, you still can. You may have thought that ship sailed decades ago, but it's still there.

All you need is Manny's website—and the cojones.

Fernandez Traded Hoops For Hooks

Manny Fernandez not only loved boxing as a kid, he did it, chalking up 25 amateur bouts, 24 of them wins.

But at 6'1" with a 42-inch vertical leap, Manny was a real good basketball player too. So, eventually, he had to choose. "My mom was pretty clear, it was going to be basketball and that was that."

He knew why she felt that way too. Fernandez was raised in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. When Billy Joel immortalized in song that he may be crazy, he offered as evidence that he walk there alone. It's a tough place to grow up.

When Manny was 12, he got to see his 19-year-old brother gunned down before his eyes. He came up angry, and his mother sick of violence. Manny would play basketball and that was that.

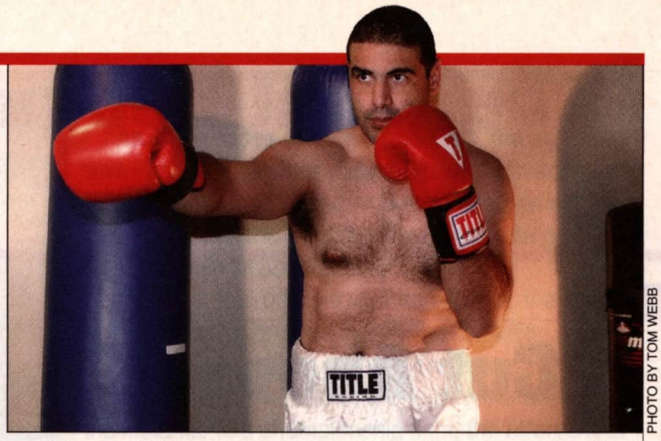


PHOTO BY TOM WEBB

Fernandez rekindled an old love in Masters Boxing

So he did. Manny says he played as a pro in Spain, then tried out in the 2003-04 pre-season with the Los Angeles Clippers before being released. But life goes on and things change. Manny suffered a knee injury and left basketball behind, pursuing life in the business world, eventually becoming the manager of a Home Depot in Santa Maria, California, where he remains today.

But his love of boxing followed him, like some old dream that wouldn't die. *So why not try it now*, he thought. But how could he do this? Where could he possibly do it as an adult? www.mastersboxingdivision.com is the result of that search.

Frankie Gomez Goes Pro

Frankie Gomez, 2009 National Champion and World Championship light welterweight silver medalist, has signed with Golden Boy Promotions.

Needless to say, the 18-year-old Gomez' decision to leave his amateur days behind him two years before the 2012 Olympic Games is bad news for USA Boxing and for USA hopes to medal at the London Games.

Many believe Gomez was the USA's best chance for gold.

"I'm very happy we signed him," said Oscar De La Hoya. "I saw him spar about three weeks ago and I haven't seen something like that in a long, long time. This kid just has it. You can feel it in the air."

USA Boxing may be disappointed. But Frankie Gomez is first a son and a brother. "He saw an opportunity to help out his family financially at a time when they needed that support," said Coach Hector Ibarra.

"Frankie's family would never go to him, saying they needed help," Ibarra continued, "but his sister said he got home one day and just he figured it out." Frankie gave his mother a hug and kiss and said, "Don't worry, Mom. It'll be okay."

It'll be okay, all right. Frankie Gomez is going to shoot up like a rocket. ■

Coming Events

2010 Youth World Championships
April 20 – May 2, Baku, Azerbaijan

National Golden Gloves
May 3 – 8, Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock, AK

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

A Cut Above

When Edwin Valero successfully defended his WBC lightweight title against Antonio DeMarco in Monterrey, Mexico in February, people discussed Valero's forehead cut more than his punching power. Even Showtime boxing commentator Al Bernstein called the laceration "horrendous."

The American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians received numerous member e-mails as to why the referee, Lawrence Cole, did not stop the fight. Comments and questions included the following:

"If the hometown doctor is afraid to stop the fight for fear his own guy will lose, why doesn't the referee stop it anyway?"

"Why would a referee call in a doctor instead of just stopping it right there for the safety of the fighter, who should have been under the care of a plastic surgeon immediately?"

"This has to be the worst thing I ever saw in the ring, and we are supposed to be making progress towards making boxing safer for the fighter?"

"Do you like watching a guy's skull just about exposed and allow it to keep getting hit?"

PHOTO BY OMAR TORRES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Valero's cut was deep but didn't impair his vision against DeMarco

I marvel as to why there still exists such confusion regarding cuts—especially among officials.

There are many things for the referee and physician to consider when stopping a fight on a cut. I have written about some of these in past columns, but Valero's situation brings up several aspects seldom discussed.

A cut, in and of itself, rarely determines a fight's outcome. But, the following criteria should stop a fight on cuts: If it occurs on the location on the face that endangers the eyeball or eye muscles; the fighter is not handling the injury—as it affects his vision or depth perception; or allowing the fight to continue could result in permanent disfigurement.

Dom Coletta, New Jersey's respected chief ringside physician, has more experience than most in handling cuts. "When I see a boxer is cut, I immediately reach for a gauze pad in my jacket pocket and get ready to go to the ring apron or the boxer's corner," says Coletta. "From ringside, I first try to judge the amount of the bleeding, which can indicate the general size and depth of the cut. I check it the first chance after the injury, and then after each round, unless the cutman has sufficiently stopped the bleeding.

"If it is above the boxer's eye [lid] and affecting the fighter's ability to see clearly, the fight is most likely stopped immediately. If it is 'borderline,' I'll usually give a good cutman a chance to get it under control. Deep cuts (down to the muscle or bone) and mouth lacerations (that can compromise a boxer's breathing) are also reasons to stop a fight."

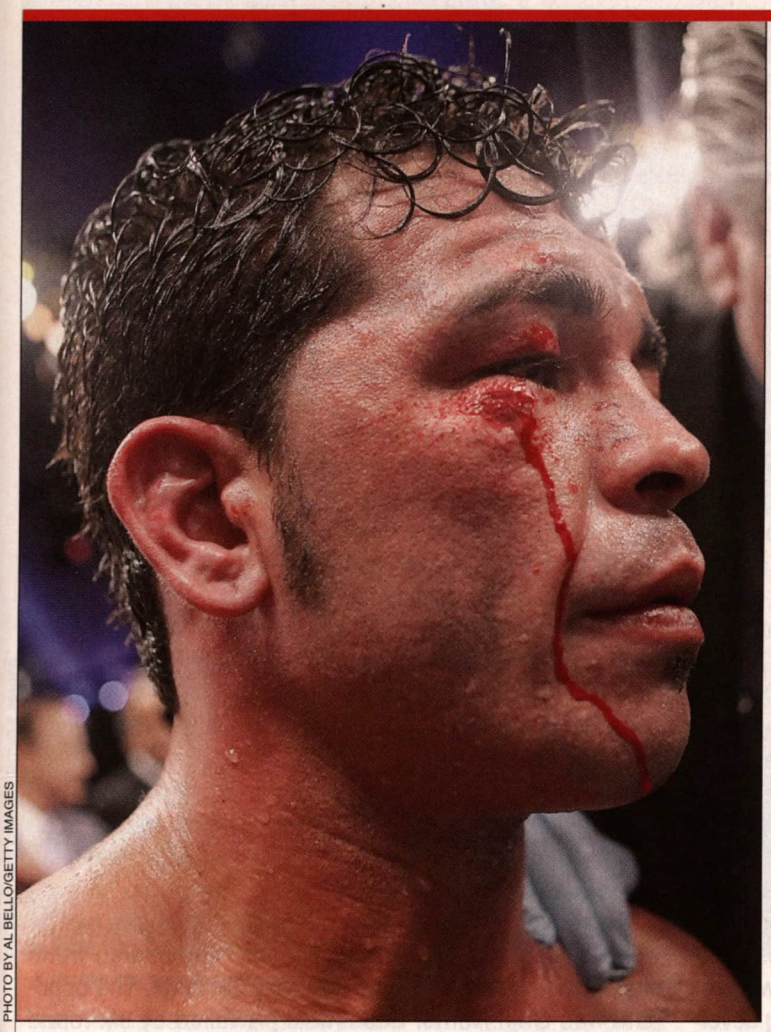


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

With fighters like Gatti, style is taken into account with cuts

As soon as Valero sustained the severe cut on the right side of his forehead against DeMarco, the referee called in the physician.

Unfortunately, the doctor's first mistake was to exceed his role by *treating* the cut during his examination. The doctor is not there to take sides by placing pressure on the injury to control the bleeding. He is not the cutman. He should have briefly evaluated the cut's location, spread it apart to determine its depth, and then assessed whether or not the blood flow might interfere with Valero's vision.

It becomes a bit tricky for the physician to ask the fighter if he wishes to continue. If the cut doesn't medically warrant a stoppage, but the fighter doesn't want to fight, then it is the fighter stopping the bout. On the other hand, the physician needs to make the decision on the seriousness of the laceration irrespective of the boxer's opinion, unless he declares he cannot see. Unfortunately, it is difficult to prove the veracity of a fighter saying he can't see during a bout. So, a fight is always stopped on the side of caution under these circumstances.

Coletta worked many of Arturo Gatti's great Atlantic City bouts, including Gatti's 1998 brawl against Angel Manfredy. "Gatti got a three-inch gash above his eye; it was very deep," said Coletta. "It expanded rapidly, and I had to stop the bout even though, as you can imagine, Arturo wanted to continue."

As in the cases of Valero and Gatti, the style and endurance of a fighter must be taken into account. Therefore, it would be reasonable for a boxer with experience and skill to be allowed to continue longer than someone with lesser credentials.

Although few officials wish to admit it, the round is important. No one, especially the physician, wants to see a fight result in a no-contest because it was stopped before the end of the fourth round. And, in the instance of a championship fight, the referee and doctor want to see the fight proceed if at all possible, especially if a serious cut occurs in the championship rounds.

One thing worth mentioning is the effect MMA has had on boxing ringside medicine. Obviously, these are two very different sports. MMA cuts are typically deeper and more bloody, often the result of an elbow or knee. These fights are frequently allowed to continue, but this places added pressure on the physician.

Coletta notes he has allowed a badly cut MMA fighter to continue because the fight was being fought on the ground grappling, and if the fighters were upright, the same criteria in boxing would apply—with the understanding that much less force can be administered on the ground.

I agree, but ring physicians aren't used to seeing as much blood in boxing as they do in MMA. It is my contention that these MMA experiences are slowly changing doctors' attitudes towards lacerations and blood—as a result, boxing stoppages on cuts are diminishing.

After dealing with severe MMA cuts, I, too, might have allowed Valero to continue—at least until the completion of the fourth round. In this way, both fighters would have had an opportunity to determine the bout's outcome.

The cut was fairly high on his forehead; it was nowhere near nerves that control the brow, and it was lateral enough that the flow of blood didn't interfere with Valero's vision or performance. Yes, it was very deep and might have gone down to the bone, but what was the real risk to Valero, if any? I agree that it will take a long time to heal and might have required a plastic surgeon, but Valero doesn't fight that often. And, what would have been the harm in suspending a fighter at this stage in his career for four-to-six months?

It is important for officials to be consistent in handling cuts, but when one is dealing with different fighters with varying histories, it is tough to demonstrate that consistency to the public.

Dr. Michael Schwartz, American Association of Ringside Physicians President, believes education is the key. "The answer is to better educate the referees, doctors, and officials of the criteria for cuts, head injuries, etc., so they can make the appropriate decision."

This will help everyone avoid controversy, and the best boxer on a given night can prove victorious. ■

By Jim Bagg

At Last! Klitschko vs. Sosnowski!

Early in 2010, the boxing world waited with bated breath to find out whether Vitali Klitschko would be defending his heavyweight strap against Nicolay Valuev because, well, that's what you do when that sweaty wookie Valuev is involved—you hold your breath, lest you end up unconscious from the toxic fumes. But the negotiations failed (Don King asked for $4-million, not realizing the sweaty-wookie market has crashed right along with the world economy), so we turned our attention to possible replacement opponents.

Would it be Klitschko vs. fellow beltholder David Haye? Maybe an undefeated prospect like Denis Boytsov or Odlanier Solis? Or would we perhaps get lucky and land the fight everyone in boxing has been talking about for years ... Klitschko vs. Albert Sosnowski!

Step aside "Thrilla In Manila," it's time for the ... uh ... anyone know a word that rhymes with "Gelsenkirchen?" Pending feedback from someone who speaks fluent German, let's just say it's time for the "Threlsenkirchen In Gelsenkirchen!" Whatever they call it, Klitschko-Sosnowski, which takes place in Germany on May 29, is a dream come true for the world of boxing. For the Bagganoodle, this is the most exciting development in his life since he got that barf stain out of his couch last summer.

What's that you say? You're dubious about Sosnowski's credentials? Consider the following:

In his most recent fight, he defeated Paolo Vidoz, *an Olympic medalist*! Vitali's brother, Wladimir, also won an Olympic medal. So it's kind of like Sosnowski is coming off a win over Wladimir Klitschko. Just try to tell the Baggarooski that isn't a great hook for this fight.

In his last fight before that, Sosnowski held Francesco Pianeta to a draw. Pianeta was 18-0 coming in. In other words, *nobody* has ever done as well against Pianeta as Sosnowski did. Feather, meet cap.

Prior to that, Sosnowski knocked out Danny Williams, who of course knocked out Mike Tyson. How much clearer of an indication do you need that Sosnowski is better now than Tyson ever was?

And Sosnowski hasn't only beaten fighters who've beaten world champions. "The Polish Dragon" has beaten world champions directly. The date was May 28, 2005. The opponent was Orlin Norris. Sosnowski prevailed by six-round

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Bagg wonders if Klitschko can get his jab off against Sosnowski as he did Juan Carlos Gomez

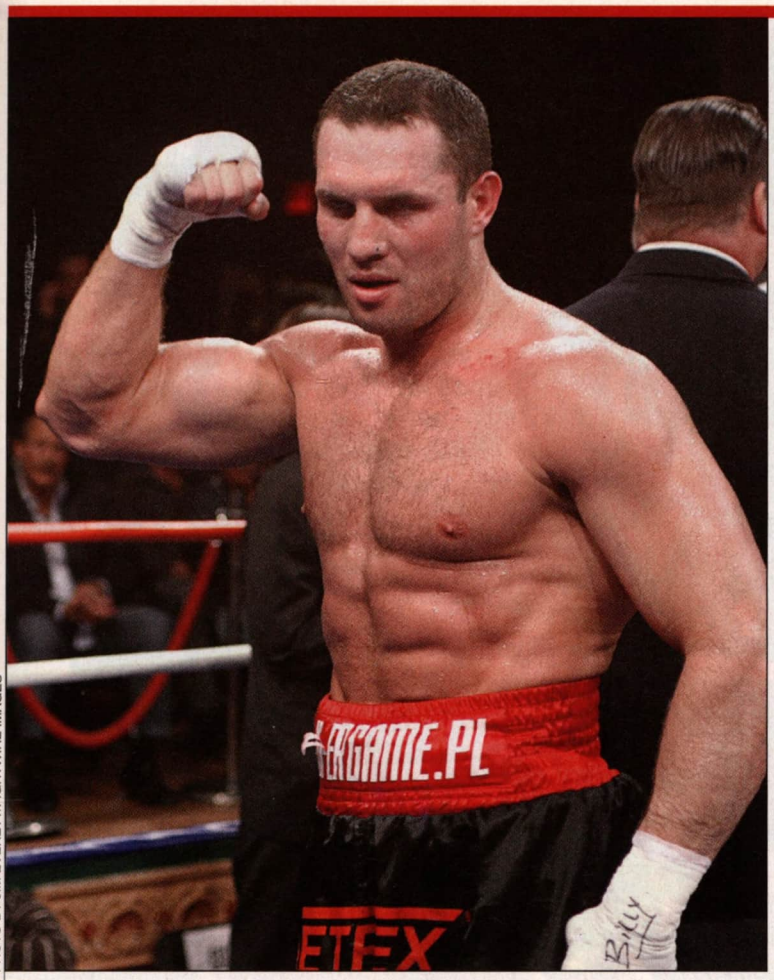


PHOTO BY JIM EVERETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Klitschko can only hope to contain the dangerous Sosnowski

majority decision. That's the kind of win that gets you on Ed Brophy's speed dial.

Of course, the Baggnanimous has heard the vocal minority criticizing Sosnowski on account of one little loss to Zuri Lawrence. But Lawrence just happens to be arguably the best pure boxer the heavyweight division has ever known. You're talking about a fighter without a single knockout win in 44 pro fights. Wouldn't you have to be Willie-Pep-like in the skill department to compile a winning record without a shred of punching power? A loss to Zuri Lawrence is nothing to hang your head about. And if you saw that fight on ESPN2, you know the unanimous 80-72 scorecards were absurd. The Baggaluffagus gave Sosnowski two rounds. So there.

And if all of that isn't enough to sell you on the fact that Sosnowski is a qualified challenger, here's the mustard on the kielbasa: The Polish Dragon is a former World Boxing Foundation heavyweight champion! Look at the list of men who've held the belt: Sosnowski, Frans Botha, Audley Harrison, and Rob Calloway. Those four legends are part of quite an exclusive club—and that's in addition to being four people who've never been in the Baggmeister's kitchen.

Naturally, because Sosnowski is Polish, there will be those who compare him to Andrew Golota. But do you know how many times Sosnowski has fouled out of a fight? Zero. Do you know how many times he's quit in a fight? Zero. It's official: Sosnowski is mentally tougher than Golota. On a related note, he's straighter than Liberace, taller than Dr. Ruth, and loves puppies and children more than Osama Bin Laden.

Add it all up, and the Baggitarius smells something rising just above the Valuev sweat funk: an upset. This isn't just a heavyweight dream fight. It's a passing of the torch to the man who will carry the heavyweight division into a new decade and a new era of prosperity, Albert Sosnowski. The Polish Dragon's time has arrived.

And once he's disposed of Klitschko, we can move on to the one fight in boxing that's even bigger than Klitschko-Sosnowski: Lawrence-Sosnowski II! In today's heavyweight division, it's just one threlsenkirchen after another.

Double Your Punching Pleasure

In the Bagginator's day-to-day life, the term "double fisting" has a very specific meaning: a beer in one hand and another beer in the other. It can also mean a beer in one hand and a shot of hard liquor in the other, or maybe shots in each hand, but the Baggelosity digresses. The reason he's writing about "double fisting" is because Manny Pacquiao demonstrated against Josh "Giving The CompuBox Boys The Night Off" Clottey that the term has a very different meaning in boxing, one only a few rare talents can realize.

In the fourth round, partially because he's Manny Pacquiao and there's nothing he can't do in the boxing ring and partially because Clottey's high guard and low activity invited it, "Pac-Man" delivered the old bell-ringer, both fists landing at once, one on each ear. It wasn't an entirely original move—the Bagg-o-tricks has seen a few fighters pull it off over the years, most recently Emanuel Augustus against Ray Oliveira. But what made it unique this time was that referee Rafael Ramos decided to scold Pacquiao even though he'd done nothing wrong.

Some have speculated that two fists landing at once counts as a push, and that's why Ramos deemed it illegal. Others have guessed that Ramos viewed two fists landing at once as a form of holding and hitting. If either is the case, Ramos is a bug-eyed idiot. The double punch clearly didn't act as a push. And to qualify as holding and hitting, you need the presence of holding. This was hitting and hitting. Which, last time the Baggenius checked, is the whole idea of boxing, to hit. In essence, this was the most rapid-fire combination punching possible. Hey, Ramos, are you going to start giving out warnings for guys who jab and then follow with a quick right hand?

In the heat of the moment, maybe Ramos just reacted without having any time to think. He saw something he'd never seen before, and his gut told him, "That can't be legal." Well, it is. There's absolutely nothing in any boxing rulebook that says you can't punch with both hands at once. Double-fisting is perfectly legal.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Clottey had problems with just one fist let alone two

And on a slow Saturday night, either in the midst of a one-sided fight at Cowboys Stadium or in the midst of a long, lonely evening on the Baggadocious' couch, double-fisting is encouraged.

Now Or Never (Preferably Never)

One key to building a following for a young fighter is to get him exposure. The more people who see him, the more the buzz surrounding him builds.

Except there's one little caveat: The fighter in question has to be good. If he stinks, then the best way to advance his career is to never let the TV cameras near him.

The fight Bob Arum is talking about making between Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and John Duddy is one of those fights where you're probably picking whoever you've seen less recently. Every time one of them fights, his stock drops. Chavez got a plum undercard spot beneath Pacquiao-Miguel Cotto. Duddy got a plum undercard spot beneath Pacquiao-Clottey. The Bagganderthal is no expert in the mathematics of fruit, but as best he can tell, plum plus plum equals rotten tomato.

If Arum is going to make this fight, he'd better make it now, before either of these glorified clubfighters does any more damage to his image. So let's get it over with.

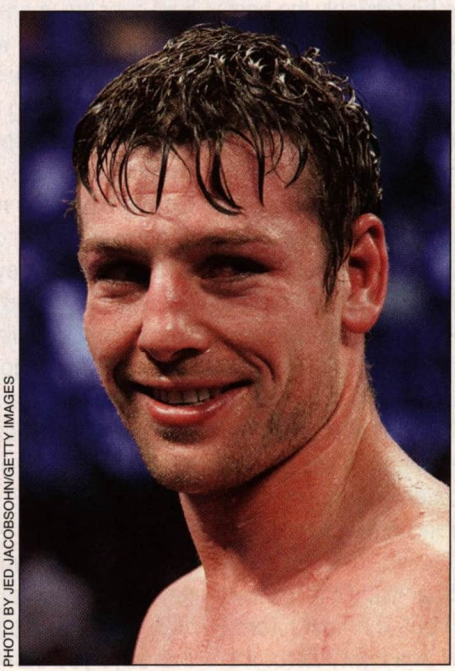


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Who wants to see Duddy against anyone?

Duddy vs. Chavez. Loser leaves boxing. And winner does the same.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Harrison Cuello, a Bronx-based Dominican who has lost to a who's who of 140-pounders over the last three years, but decided on March 6 to make someone else his stepping stone for a change. That someone else was Steve Forbes, who not so long ago was sharing a ring with Oscar De La Hoya. Now it might be time for Forbes to ask "The Golden Boy" to share something else: retirement advice.

Forbes thought he was going to be shaking off 365 days of rust in an easy tuneup. And you couldn't blame him for thinking that—since 2007, Cuello had lost to Randall Bailey, Mike Arnaoutis, Victor Cayo, Ricardo Williams, Vanes Martirosyan, "The New" Ray Robinson, and DeMarcus Corley. Cuello was 0-4-1 in his last five fights and 18-12-3 (14) overall. It was supposed to be an easy paycheck for the *Contender Season Two* runner-up.

But nothing went as planned for Forbes, starting long before the boxers got in the ring. The bout was part of the Devon Alexander-Juan Urango

The Monthly Mailbagg

If Sandra Bullock can win an Oscar, then anything is possible. One of the Baggenbrau's readers might even send in an email that's concise, asks an interesting question, and has nary a punctuation error. Like this one, for instance:

Hey Baggnilla Ice,

Jose Luis Castillo was one of my favorite fighters of the last 10 years, and about five years ago, he looked like he was on his way to the Hall of Fame. Now I'm not so sure, because it seems iike the way things ended for him have overshadowed how good he was in his prime. What do you think? Does he still have a chance?

Dave J.

Dave,

If you're looking for a shred of hope that your boy can make the Hall, your best bet is to cling to three words from your email: "five years ago." See how much things can change in five years? In five years, you can go from the guy who nearly ran Floyd Mayweather out of the ring and was one-half of the best fight in 20 years to the guy who blew three weigh-ins in three years and quit on his stool against Alfonso Gomez. Five years just happens to be the amount of time required between retirement (Castillo claims now to be retired) and eligibility for the Hall. So what keeps Hall of Fame hope alive for Castillo is the possibility that our minds will play tricks on us and, five years from now, we'll all remember the good times.

But realistically, sorry to say it, Castillo has almost no shot. He was an outstanding fighter from 2000-2005, but he was never a pound-for-pounder. "El Temible" definitely deserves to have his name on the ballot. But when it comes to getting voted in, it's "no way, Jose" for No-Weigh Jose.

Castillo is not Hall worthy after a late career filled with losses to fighters like Gomez, says Bagg

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

card at Mohegan Sun and was supposed to take place early in the show. But promoter Don King and HBO had a dispute over an advertising logo on the canvas (turns out HBO didn't approve of an ad for King's latest web venture, www.HighHairedFetishPorn.com) and there was a lengthy delay while it was painted over. This led to the fight being cut from a 10-rounder to an eight-rounder and taking place *after* the main event in front of a nearly empty arena, with the fighters being gloved up for more than two hours before touching 'em up. And at the end of eight rounds, in which Forbes could never find a rhythm, Cuello won a majority decision that should have been unanimous.

Maybe it was just the perfect set of circumstances for Cuello, but when you're winless in your last five, a victory is a victory. And when that victory comes against a former titleholder, former reality-TV star, and former foe of De La Hoya, it's Stingray-worthy. The arena at Mohegan Sun may have been empty, but Cuello's trophy case isn't anymore. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 114, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Floyd And Manny

Floyd Mayweather keeps telling people that Manny Pacquiao was ordinary until he was 26 and then became extraordinary overnight allegedly because of PEDs. Manny was a three-division champion by the time he was 24! There's nothing ordinary about that. Floyd is right about one thing: Manny Pacquiao is an extraordinary fighter!

VICTOR RIVERO
vicrivero22@yahoo.com

Floyd Mayweather is a fighter of considerable talent who refuses to enter a fight in which he cannot perceive himself to have a considerable advantage. I doubt that Mayweather will fight Manny Pacquiao unless Pacquiao breaks something important. Otherwise, the fight might be decided on the merits of the fighters themselves, and Mayweather doesn't seem to want that.

Sugar Ray Robinson was called the best pound-for-pound fighter when, as a welter, he pounded out middleweights, giving away 10 pounds to show he really was king of the ring. As a middleweight, he fought light heavyweight champion Joey Maxim for the 175-pound title and was beaten by the heat that had also kayoed the referee. Contrast that with Mayweather, who wouldn't give away two pounds to his own grandmother.

STUART MILLS
Fredericton, NB

Give Margarito A Second Chance

I believe that Antonio Margarito deserves a second chance, just like Shane Mosley. I'm not debating Margarito's innocence or guilt. I just have a solution: Let him fight, but make it mandatory for him to have his hands wrapped by the opposing camp, using the same tape for both men.

WILL GODIESS
wgodd10@yahoo.com

Alexander The Great

Devon Alexander is the best junior welterweight in the world, and look for him to prove it in the months and years ahead. He will also jump into the pound-for-pound rankings and quickly climb that ladder as well. Devon has all the skills needed to dominate boxing for the next five to seven years. I've seen Devon fight live multiple times, and no boxer can come close to matching his combination of speed and power.

I await a Devon Alexander-Timothy Bradley fight, which Devon will win by knockout in the late rounds. It is probably too late to score a superfight with Manny Pacquiao or Floyd Mayweather, but if Devon keeps knocking out talented fighters, such as Juan Urango, maybe one of those matches will happen.

AARON DAVID VANDEGRIFF
Ashland, MO

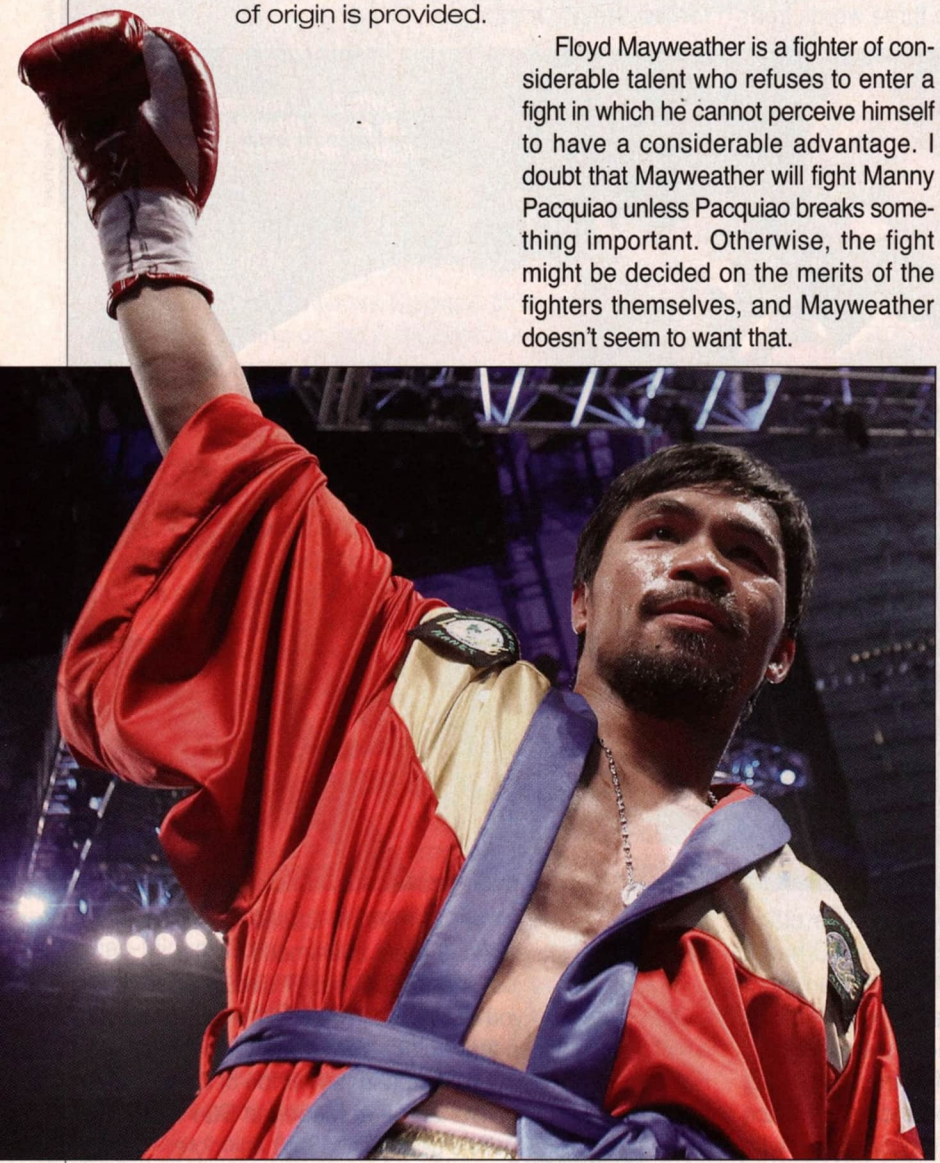


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Many readers wrote about pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao and his chief rival for that distinction, Floyd Mayweather. Among those expressing their opinions this issue are Victor Rivero and Stuart Mills.

PHOTO BY JEFF FUSCO/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

Reader Richard Escoto had a vastly different experience trying to get Shane Mosley and Floyd Mayweather to sign a copy of THE RING magazine.

Dunphy vs. Cosell

I have been a RING magazine subscriber for many years. One of my favorite columns is Jeff Ryan's "Ryan out Loud," but as much as I enjoy reading his work, I have to take exception to his comment that Howard Cosell should have been inducted in the International Boxing Hall of Fame at the same time as Don Dunphy. To paraphrase another famous quote, Howard Cosell couldn't carry Dunphy's jockstrap. If the IBHOF were to induct Cosell with Dunphy, then they should have inducted Butterbean with Sugar Ray Robinson. Cosell would have been nothing in boxing if it hadn't been for Muhammad Ali. Perhaps the IBHOF should consider inducting Tex Cobb whose performance against Larry Holmes caused Cosell to give up boxing commentary.

NICK MUELLER
Framingham, MS

Contrast And Compare

Allow me to offer an anecdote about my experience with Floyd Mayweather at the Mayweather-Shane Mosley press conference in Los Angeles. I had the good fortune to be approached by Shane Mosley first when he came down to sign autographs. Mosley was kind enough to autograph my December 2009 RING issue with Floyd Mayweather on the cover. Moments later, I was within a few feet of Mayweather asking if I could get his autograph as well, but I was purposefully being overlooked. Mayweather's bodyguard informed me that he would not sign anything Mosley already made his mark on (which may explain why Mayweather took so long to sign the fight contract). I'm not so sure how often athletes forget where the money for their houses, cars, and illegitimate children comes from, but this was the first time I was denied an autograph. Lesson learned from this experience: Mayweather can be loved and hated, but he cannot share the fans' affection or approval.

RICHARD ESCOTO
Monterey Park, CA

In A Class Of His Own

Yuriorkis Gamboa, the unbeaten Cuban featherweight, will remain unbeaten as a featherweight. He is much too strong, too fast, and too skilled to lose to anyone in the 126-pound division right now, including Puerto Rico's Juan Manuel Lopez. Gamboa's recent victory over Rogers Mtagwa showed that he is a complete fighter and too much for any contender in the weight class.

DAVID MAHON,
Miami, FL

Girls Will Be Girls

After reading over Jeff Ryan's column in the March 2010 issue, I agree that round card girls are unnecessary. I've worked the corners at a few amateur fights where they have been in the way as the coach and I was climbing through the ropes to assist the boxers. Maybe the guys who like seeing the flesh on display also can't count the rounds, which is why round girls are still allowed to exist. As a woman, the round girls don't do anything for me but cause a lot of eye rolling.

Where round card girls are really unnecessary is at women's boxing matches. There you have real women taking care of real business inside the ring, and then half-dressed women come prancing out in between the rounds. The mix of progressive strides that women athletes have made alongside those throwbacks to when women weren't valued for much other than looks makes no sense at all.

HILLARI HUNTER
Chicago, IL ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Don Stewart

Grand Slam?

It's a decent matchup, sure, but at first glance **Miguel Cotto** versus **Yuri Foreman** is no reason to skip your cousin's wedding. A declining star coming off a beating almost as one-sided as **Tawny Kitaen-Chuck Finley** is matched against a largely unknown beltholder with an ironic last name considering his feather fists? That open bar is sounding pretty good.

Fortunately for Top Rank and HBO, Cotto-Foreman is loaded with as many juicy plot lines as any major fight of the past decade.

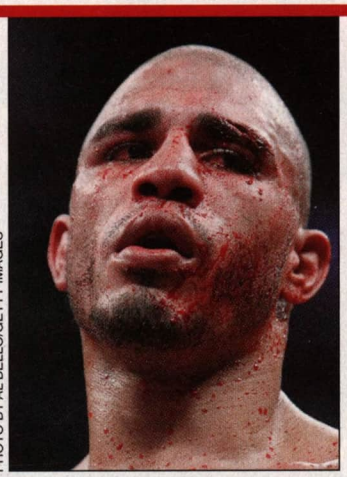


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Can Cotto bounce back from rough 2009?

Top Rank's **Bob Arum** helped create the most obvious one by securing a deal to move the May 5 card from New York's Madison Square Garden to the new Yankees Stadium. It will be the first boxing show held at the new home of the Bronx Bombers, whose old stadium hosted **Joe Louis-Max Schmeling II**, **Tony Zale-Rocky Graziano I**, and **Muhammad Ali-Ken Norton III**, among many other historic fights.

It's a pivotal moment in the career of Cotto, 34-2 (27), who absorbed a frightening amount of punishment in three of his previous four bouts. It's his first fight since last November's brutal 12th-round TKO loss to Pacquiao, his first since the sudden death of his father in January, his first as a junior middleweight, and his first under a new trainer (still unannounced as of mid-March). Can the 29 year old still be a star, or is it time to focus on his growing business interests?

Foreman, 28-0 (8), is one of the sport's more interesting stories. A native of Belarus and a resident of Brooklyn, New York, Foreman is studying to become a rabbi. He proved he's more than just a novelty act on the Pacquiao-Cotto undercard, however, when he took the WBA junior middleweight belt from **Daniel Santos** in a surprisingly one-sided decision. Upsetting Cotto could make Foreman a star.

In a further twist, the Yankees had to resolve a conflict with a scheduled bar mitzvah at the stadium before booking Cotto-Foreman. Arum reportedly offered the family tickets to the show and a prefight meeting with Foreman. At least someone is choosing to skip the party to see the fight.

Doubling Down

While Showtime is investing in the super middleweight division with its "Super Six" tourney, rival HBO is throwing its weight behind the 140 pounders. ESPN.com reported in mid-March that the network is putting together a series of fights in the hot division in hopes of crowning a successor to current champ **Manny Pacquiao**.

WBA titlist **Amir Khan**, rated third by THE RING, defends against fifth-ranked **Paulie Malignaggi** in an intriguing matchup May 15 at New York's Madison Square Garden. It will be the first fight in the U.S. for the British star Khan, 22-1 (16), who has won four straight since a 2008 kayo loss to **Breidis Prescott**. For Malignaggi, who is coming off a convincing win against **Juan Diaz**, it's another chance to be a giant killer.

"I think I'm getting better and better, and my resume speaks volumes," said the always quotable Malignaggi, 27-3 (5). "Amir has never fought a guy like me."

HBO will also televise **Victor Ortiz** versus **Nate Campbell** on the Khan-Malignaggi undercard and was set to air sixth-ranked **Marcos Maidana**'s March 27 bout with **Victor Cayo** as this issue went to press. Also reported to be in the works: Top-rated 140-pounder **Timothy Bradley**, a Showtime staple the past couple of years, will jump to HBO starting with a June 26 "Boxing After Dark" test with **Luis Carlos Abregu**; second-ranked **Devon Alexander**'s summer defense of his WBC and IBF belts, possibly against **Zab Judah**; and a possible summer bout at 140 between former lightweight beltholder **Edwin Valero** and **Lamont Peterson**.

Listen Up

Vitali Klitschko settled on European champ **Albert "The Dragon" Sosnowski** as his May 29 opponent at Gelsenkirchen, Germany, after the WBC heavyweight beltholder failed to come to terms with either **Nicolay Valuev** or **Odlanier Solis**. It's hardly *Enter The Dragon*. Sosnowski, 45-2-1 (27), was shut out over eight rounds by journeyman **Zuri Lawrence** in 2008. The Pole will also be giving up five inches in height and three inches in reach to Klitschko ... In a rematch of last September's thriller that ended in a draw, **Hugo Cazares**, 30-6-2 (22), returns to Osaka, Japan, for a second shot at junior bantamweight beltholder **Nobuo Nashiro**, 13-1-1 (8). Nashiro, an Osaka native, is one of three titlists recognized at 115 pounds by the WBA. Despite the sanctioning body silliness, the May 8 matchup is an important one, since Nashiro is ranked second and Cazares fourth at junior bantam by THE RING ... On the **Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez IV** undercard on May 22, THE RING fourth-ranked bantamweight **Yohnny Perez**, 20-0 (14), makes his first defense of the IBF bantamweight belt against eighth-ranked **Abner Mares**, 19-0 (12). ■

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